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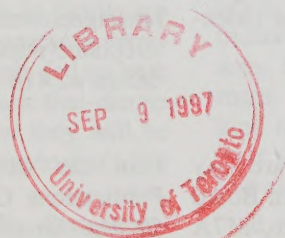
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# Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

# Journal des débats (Hansard)

Wednesday 3 September 1997

Mercredi 3 septembre 1997



Speaker  
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Président  
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

Clerk  
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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 3 September 1997

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 3 septembre 1997

*The House met at 1332.  
Prayers.*

### MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

#### BY-ELECTION IN ORIOLE

**Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood):** For the last two years, the citizens of Metro Toronto have been under a reckless attack by the Mike Harris revolutionaries. The revolutionaries have arrogantly refused to listen to the ordinary people in Metro and in the riding of Oriole. Finally, tomorrow, the same voters who have been ignored and run over by the Harris bulldozer will have an opportunity to send Queen's Park a wake-up call.

The voters in the Oriole by-election will be able to remind the Harris revolutionaries that they don't want the downloading of social housing on their property taxes. The voters of Oriole don't like classroom education being decimated by the cutbacks in their children's schools. The voters of Oriole will be able to say no to the closing of 11 of their community hospitals in Metropolitan Toronto. The voters in Oriole will be able to say no to the downloading of prescription user fees on seniors. With their votes, the voters of Oriole will be able to remind Harris that removing rent control is going to hurt tenants in Metro Toronto. Tomorrow the voters who voted no to the megacity will be able to tell Mike Harris that it wasn't right to ignore the 400,000 people in Metro who voted no in the referendum.

Like many people in Ontario, the voters in Oriole are fed up with an intrusive government that constantly interferes in the everyday life of citizens. They are fed up with a daily barrage of orders from Queen's Park that dictate how they should live their lives. Tomorrow they will be able to tell the Harris revolutionaries that people don't like being —

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Statements. Member for Beaches-Woodbine.

#### PUBLIC HEALTH

**Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine):** Yesterday during question period I put a question to the government around the downloading of public health and particularly the change in mandatory guidelines, the weakening of mandatory guidelines. The answer indicated in spades that the government had not looked at the detail contained in

the changes they are making. It's like so many other things: This government bulldozes ahead and doesn't look at the implications, doesn't look at the consequences of the detail of implementation.

In this case they have changed the mandatory guidelines and have totally eliminated from the mandatory guidelines a focus on adolescent health. What does that mean? It means that certain programs that were mandatory, like counselling and intervention and research in terms of teen suicide, like counselling and education in terms of teen drug abuse, are completely gone from the mandatory guidelines with this download. We know that with the downloading pressure in terms of cost and with the demand that there be about a 15% cut from public health budgets, many of these programs are going to be jeopardized.

I also want to talk about the issue of sexual health programs for teens. In the past this was something that was 100% funded by the province. It wasn't shared with municipalities. The province has decided to maintain 100% funding for vaccinations. I urge them to maintain 100% funding for sexual health programs. We don't need to see more unwanted pregnancies, more unwanted sexual disease among our teens. This is an important public —

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Thank you.

#### DIANA, PRINCESS OF WALES

**Mr Jim Brown (Scarborough West):** It is with great sadness that I rise in the House to pay tribute to the memory of Diana, Princess of Wales. All of us here today, and indeed the entire world, mourn her untimely death. Her sons, Prince William and Prince Henry, are now without mum. They will not have their mother to give them the kind of nurturing care that they have come to rely on in their young lives as adolescents and students. They have lost as only children lose when a loving parent dies.

It seems only yesterday that we were watching her walk down the great aisle of St Paul's Cathedral, wedding bouquet in hand, to begin her new life as a member of the royal family and an international celebrity and promoter of charitable causes.

It was Diana who led by example. It was she who touched people suffering from AIDS and other diseases and so brought inner healing to their hearts and their minds. Diana reached out to people across the globe. She was truly at home amidst the cultural diversity of the world, which was her great joy.

It was she who walked among children maimed by land mines to let them know that the world had not forgotten them. She hugged victims of cancer and embraced people suffering from debilitating diseases. In so doing, she made them feel the electrifying glow of her personal royal charisma.

It was she who made us all feel special with the warmth of her smile. A tragic figure to the end, Diana herself understood what it means to suffer in silence. This is why her personal outreach to others was so sincere and genuine.

I join with members of this House in extending our sincerest condolences and prayers to the family and friends of Diana, especially her sons, Prince William and Prince Henry. We have all suffered a great loss in the untimely passing of Diana, Princess of Wales and queen of our hearts.

#### BY-ELECTION IN WINDSOR-RIVERSIDE

**Mrs Sandra Papatello (Windsor-Sandwich):** We have an opportunity tomorrow in three ridings across Ontario to have a referendum on the Mike Harris government. What I can tell you is that the people of Windsor-Riverside are prepared for a referendum on the Mike Harris government. We know that Conservative MPPs, those in cabinet and those who sit on the back bench, have had little or no effect on changing the course of the Mike Harris government. Even those cabinet ministers who sit at the cabinet table and have refuted the kinds of policies that Mike Harris has brought about have had little or no effect on changing things in their own ridings.

What we know in Windsor-Riverside and what Gary McNamara has been very clear about is that health care is the number one issue. The people in Windsor-Riverside have an opportunity to speak to that tomorrow and we expect to hear that loud and clear. What we believe is that you should have reinvested in health care and you haven't. Windsor will be your number one area where you could reinvest and have not. Other MPPs who sit in the House today, Conservative MPPs, have had absolutely no effect in their own ridings, which are suffering significant health cuts and absolutely no reinvestment.

I would like to say that we will be there tomorrow. We will be there pushing for Gary McNamara so that he will be here in this House with us fighting for health care and fighting for reinvestment in health care. It is absolutely the number one issue in Windsor-Riverside.

1340

#### ROYAL CANADIAN LEGION BRANCH 17

**Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold):** This year Legion Week is being celebrated from September 14 through to September 20. On Saturday, September 20, Royal Canadian Legion Branch 17 in Thorold is going to be honouring four of its members. Gord Stevens, Raymond Gonzalez, Gordon Boucock and Andrew Barry will be receiving their 50-year medals. That is, among them,

200 years of service to the Royal Canadian Legion and service to their communities.

Of course, this outstanding service is preceded in the case of all four of them by distinguished and honourable service in the armed forces, in the case of these four gentlemen, of both Canada and the United States: service during wartime, which included service in the merchant marine, in the American navy and in other branches of the forces, service which they performed as young men fearlessly and with great dedication to their country and to humankind and service during which they witnessed the incredible sacrifices paid by oh, so many of their comrades who paid the supreme sacrifice in those great struggles.

I'm proud of Royal Canadian Legion Branch 17 and exceptionally proud of these four gentlemen, and I'm pleased to join Branch 17 in honouring them and honouring all of their comrades, as are people in Thorold proud of them, people across Ontario and people across this country.

#### MAURICE THOMPSON

**Mrs Julia Munro (Durham-York):** A Durham-York constituent of mine believes recycling is just a way of life but his commitment to the 3Rs has resulted in the Duclos Point resident being selected as a recycling hero.

Maurice Thompson was chosen as Georgina's adult hero in the town's annual 3Rs contest and he was one of three finalists for outstanding individual in the annual Ontario Waste Minimization Awards presented by the Recycling Council of Ontario.

Thompson buries all garden cuttings and the enriched soil resulted in foot-and-a-half high marigolds last year. Thompson composts all organic kitchen waste, uses fallen twigs as kindling, collects wood for firewood and reuses nails, uses rags instead of paper towels, uses vinegar or soda for cleaning, returns plastic bags to stores, recycles paper, tin, glass and plastic, uses dishwasher on roses rather than applying insecticides. He takes old books, magazines and other reading material to the library.

The outstanding individual award recognizes a person whose perseverance and determination over the years had a measurable impact in reducing waste and promoting the conserver ethic in the community. "What I'm doing," he modestly says, "is nothing special. Anyone can do it. I wish more would."

We all echo that sentiment. My congratulations to Georgina recycling hero Maurice Thompson.

#### GASOLINE PRICES

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** For a government that is so eager to recklessly rush into major disruptive changes in the province and trample on the rights of the disadvantaged, the Harris Conservatives are reluctant indeed to take on the giant oil companies as they gouge consumers at the gas pumps in Ontario.

Oh, our fearless Premier is prepared to huff and puff and make populist noises once he hits the skids in the polls, but is he prepared to take action right here in Ontario within in his own jurisdiction, to call the oil barons on the carpet face to face, to indicate displeasure with the gas pricing policies of the oil corporations? Is Master Mike eager to pass a predatory gas pricing law to prevent the corporate captains of oil from forcing independent retailers out of business?

Obviously not. The Petro Premier is prepared to point fingers and call upon others to act, but Macho Mike is nowhere to be found when the need for action is in his own backyard.

It looks as though the real position of the Harris regime can be found in the words of the Minister of Tourism and the Minister of Energy, both of whom acted as apologists for the oil barons, one suggesting that our gas prices are comparable to other jurisdictions and the provincial government had no intention of intervening in the free market, and the other, like his Republican colleagues in the USA, fingering gas taxes as the real culprit when only the oil companies' take was on the rise.

Lots of blarney, lots of bluster from Fearless Mike but no action. To paraphrase Shakespeare, it is a tale told by a Premier, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** I ask the member for Durham East to withdraw his comments earlier made in that statement.

**Mr John O'Toole (Durham East):** I withdraw.

## TVONTARIO

**Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt):** I want to bring to the House's attention what is happening with the move towards privatizing TVO. Earlier in the summer, the Tory government decided they had to follow up on the commitment they made in the Common Sense Revolution to privatize TVO. In accordance with the privatization review framework, they awarded the adviser position to Rothschild Canada. The next step in the framework is public hearings to hear suggestions and comments about TVO from Ontarians.

The privatization secretariat wants to report back to cabinet with options and implementation plans before the end of October. If this is the case, then when are the advisers going to start the public consultation process? If the framework is to be followed, then public consultation must occur within a few weeks. The many supporters of TVOntario are waiting to hear from the government as to when and where they can make their statements of support for TVO.

This government is just plain wrong in trying to privatize TVOntario. TVO works. It is an innovator in children's educational programming with programs exported around the world, its audiences for all programs have increased 60% over the past three years, its membership has increased 35% over the past four years, and membership revenues continue to exceed expectations — all this while TVO was owned by the people of Ontario.

It's important that the people in Windsor send Wayne Lessard to this Legislature to continue the fight against the privatization of TVO.

## MILTON OPTIMIST BAGPIPERS

**Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton North):** On August 16 the Milton Optimist Bagpipers captured glory on the world stage by taking first place honours at the World Pipe Band Championships in Glasgow, Scotland. It gives me great pleasure to pipe up in the House today and acknowledge this tremendous feat.

The 20-member band, led by pipe major Gail Brown, beat 59 other bands from around the world for this prestigious title. Only one other team outside of Scotland managed to win a world title at this event. However, what makes the win all the more remarkable and satisfying is that the group only started competing in their category this year.

On behalf of Halton North and this Legislature, I would like to congratulate all the members of the world title team and also the Milton Optimists and their friends and family who supported Gail and her team in attaining this high achievement.

This win proves once again that Ontarians, when competing on the world stage, are equal to the task. I ask members of the House to join with me in congratulating the Milton Optimist Bagpipers.

## REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

### STANDING COMMITTEE ON REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

**Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton):** I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on regulations and private bills and move its adoption.

**Clerk at the Table (Ms Lisa Freedman):** Your committee begs to report the following bills without amendment:

Bill Pr78, An Act respecting the City of Scarborough

Bill Pr84, An Act respecting Japanese-Canadian Cultural Centre.

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed.

## MOTIONS

### PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

**Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Government House Leader):** Mr Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent with regard to waiving notice for ballot item 96. I seek that consent.

I move that notwithstanding standing order 95(g), the requirement for notice be waived with respect to ballot item 96.

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Is this for unanimous consent or the motion? No, you don't need consent. Is it the pleasure of the House the motion carry?

Speak to it? The member for Beaches-Woodbine.

**Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine):** I don't intend to take long to speak to this. I just want to draw a point to members of the Legislature. As you know, we have recently undergone rule changes in this Legislature, rule changes which members of the opposition opposed bitterly and which we believe deny fundamental rights and balance to this Legislature.

Many of the rules, as they have been changed, as opposed to enhancing the rights of individual members as the government has argued, in fact take away from the rights of individual members. But I want to point out that here we have an opportunity before us today to actually enhance rights of individual members, a member who failed to file notice for their private member's bill who seeks to get it heard in the slot that's available and we're being asked to give consent to that.

What I would say is that despite the fact that the government has proceeded with such draconian rule changes that are fundamentally anti-democratic, our caucus believes in enhancing the rights of individual members and therefore we will be supporting this motion today.

1350

**Hon David Johnson:** I won't be long, but apparently consent was not required for that particular motion. I was just being polite in terms of asking for it.

At any rate, the observations I've had with regard to the new rules are that they have indeed worked quite well and that a number of members of the Legislature have been involved in the debate. More and more members who apparently didn't have the opportunity previously have had the opportunity to be involved in the various debates. We think that's a healthy thing.

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** One of the problems that happens with the rule changes is the fact that if there is to be any discussion of anything taking place, the government has front-end-loaded all of these matters so that question period gets pushed back further and further into the afternoon. It makes it more difficult of course for the electronic media to be able to cover anything but the first stories out of question period, and it ensures that on certain days, if there happen to be delays because of the number of bills introduced or for whatever reason, question period might not even take place because the new rules call for the government business, no matter what it might happen to be, to commence by 4 pm.

When I hear the government House leader extol the virtues of the rule changes, we should know that we have consented today, as we would in normal circumstances always want to consent, to accommodate individual members of the Legislature as they make changes for the matters that take place in private members' public business on

Thursday morning. That's what you have seen through this particular motion.

We are more than happy to agree to it, to allow that to take place within the government caucus. We are always prepared to be cooperative in those matters, but to suggest that the rules are doing anything other than allowing the government to push its business through in record time with as little debate as possible is really stretching it.

So I say to the government House leader that we are happy to comply with this request today and other requests of this kind to accommodate our friends on the government side or in other parties.

**The Speaker:** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

## ORAL QUESTIONS

### HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

**Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition):** My question is for the Minister of Health. Minister, I have spent a considerable amount of time in the last few weeks knocking on doors in various parts of the province and I can tell you, as you are probably very much aware, that the number one issue out there is health care. People are reeling from the news that their hospitals are to be closed, that up to 15,000 nurses are going to be laid off and that there is no community-based care yet available to accommodate this change you are causing.

I want to focus on one thing in particular. In Metro you have ordered the closure of six emergency wards. I'm wondering if you understand the full consequences of that action. Twenty-five thousand patients who would normally attend at those six emergency wards will no longer be able to do so. They will have to go elsewhere. My question is, where are they going to go? I ask you to be specific in terms of your plan and your funding for those 25,000 patients.

**Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health):** As the honourable member knows, the government didn't take these decisions; the restructuring commission took the decisions. The restructuring commission has also ordered that comprehensive plans be in place to ensure that before anybody moves anywhere, the whole area of emergency services is thoroughly thought out.

A review is under way. As you know, the government has not officially responded in any way to the Metropolitan Toronto report by the Health Services Restructuring Commission. We too are seeking some of those answers at this time.

I can assure the honourable member that, as in the case of Sudbury, where we actually saw an increase in the capacity of emergency room visits with the closure of two emergencies there and amalgamation into one, you're actually going to have more capacity in the system, in a modern, full-service emergency in a modern, full-service

hospital. We'll be looking for the same results in Metro Toronto.

**Mr McGuinty:** I just want to remind the minister, in case he doesn't fully understand, that tomorrow the hospital restructuring commission will not appear on ballots. It will be your party, my party or the third party. People fully understand who's behind, who's pulling the strings in terms of the hospital restructuring commission.

I want to give you a specific example of something that happened here on the weekend of August 15 to 17. Three of six emergency wards that you are closing were so busy that they declared themselves to be full and issued redirect orders to the ambulance services.

In particular, Northwestern said that during that weekend they were full for 30 hours; Wellesley said they were full for eight hours; Women's College said they were full for six hours. Those three hospitals issued orders or requests to the ambulance services saying, for a total of 44 hours, "Don't bring them here, because we're full."

Minister, what are you going to do about this? They're straining already and you haven't even closed these. You're going to send them elsewhere. What are you going to do with these people?

**Hon Mr Wilson:** It's quite obvious to everyone involved in the process, except those trying to make political hay out of the process and bring us back to the dark ages of health care reform in this province that the Liberals seem to be stuck in, that the commission has ordered that capacity be available in the hospital buildings that remain. I say to the honourable member that the very fact that he's bringing up the suggestion that hospitals are routinely going on automatic bypass with respect to emergency services tells me the status quo needs fixing.

**Mr McGuinty:** Let's follow this up for a minute, because I find it very interesting. The minister has asked that Northwestern hospital be closed. He intends to merge that hospital with Humber Memorial. During that same weekend, August 15 to 17, Northwestern said, for 30 hours, "Don't bring them here, because we're full." It just happens to be that the same weekend Humber Memorial said, for 29 hours, "Don't bring them here; we're full." What you're going to do is compound the problem. Those who cannot go to Northwestern are supposed to be sent to Humber, where they also will not be received.

I ask you once again, Minister: What is your plan? What are the specifics? What is the funding to deal with this very critical problem?

**Hon Mr Wilson:** The honourable member always conveniently forgets to talk about the \$2.1 billion in historic cutbacks by the federal Liberal government to this province in health care. But having said that to the Liberal across the way, I would also say that restructuring is about putting more resources into those emergency rooms so they don't have to go on bypass. Restructuring will mean, not the old days of fewer nurses and fewer doctors and fewer resources, but full-service, 24-hour emergency rooms in full-service, modern hospitals. That's the goal of restructuring, in spite of the \$2.1-billion cut from the federal government.

1400

## EDUCATION FINANCING

**Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition):** In the absence of the Minister of Education, my question is for the Deputy Premier. It is perfectly obvious from that reaction that these people have not been at doors in this province for some time.

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Order. Stop the clock, please.

*Interjections.*

**Mr McGuinty:** Minister, let me tell you about something else the people are very concerned about in Ontario today. They're concerned about what you are doing, your government is doing, to education. They understand that there has now been cut after cut after cut. Some \$533 million to date has been removed from education. We've experienced the loss of junior kindergarten programs, special education programs, French immersion, library services.

People in Ottawa, Toronto and Windsor are especially concerned about news of late that you're going to be introducing a new funding formula. They're wondering exactly what it's going to mean to their communities, and in particular of course to their students. I want to give you an opportunity to allay those fears by telling us right now that you're going to guarantee that individual boards across the province will not have their per pupil funding levels cut.

**Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance):** The leader of the official opposition knows full well that the Ministry of Education has not made final decisions with respect to funding formula yet. But he mentioned a few communities in his preamble, and I would ask him a question in return: Does he not feel that students in Manitoulin Island are entitled to the same education in the province of Ontario that students in Mississauga are?

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** Of course.

**Hon Mr Eves:** If "of course" is the answer from the member for St Catharines, why didn't your government do that when they were in power for five years?

**Mr McGuinty:** It's important for the minister and his colleagues to recognize what they have done to education in Ontario thus far. They have cut junior kindergarten in 25 school boards, they have cut special education programs in 27 school boards, they have cut library services in nine school boards, and they have gutted adult education. At a time when everybody knows we've got to be able to get these people back on their feet so they can get work, you have gutted adult education in Ontario.

Once again, people are worried about what you are about to do to students when it comes to per pupil funding formulas in this province. I'll give you the opportunity once again to allay those fears and provide us with your guarantee that they will not be reduced.

**Hon Mr Eves:** We have no plans to do anything to students except improve their education in the province of

Ontario. That's the only plan this government has with respect to education: to see that the \$14 billion that's being spent on public education in this province is spent in the classroom providing better education to our young people.

I would like to quote to you from the Sault Ste Marie Star: "The unfairness in the current range of per pupil spending means that whatever the worries and pains that inevitably accompany change, the provincial government is right to move quickly. The existing disparity cannot be allowed to continue, because children in disadvantaged jurisdictions continue to suffer while we dither over the analysis." I couldn't have said it better myself.

**Mr McGuinty:** Those boards are not asking that you bring others down; they're asking that you bring theirs up. There's a big difference.

In Ottawa, they fear that if their per pupil funding levels are dropped to the median, we're going to lose anywhere from six to 12 schools, we're going to have junior kindergarten eliminated, we're going to have our special education programs cut. In Windsor, they fear music, French immersion and their arts programs and programs for the disabled will be cut. There are similar fears in boards like Toronto, Hamilton, Sault Ste Marie and Sudbury.

You alone, Minister, can allay those fears. I'll ask you for the final time: Please stand up in this House here and now and guarantee us that the per pupil funding will not be lowered for any boards in the province of Ontario.

**Hon Mr Eves:** We are spending \$14 billion on public education in this province. Unfortunately, not enough of it is finding its way into the classroom. We are doing things that will provide more equity and fairness in the education system and improve the quality of education of our young people. I always thought that was what an education system was all about.

You're talking about the concerns of people in Windsor, Ontario. Perhaps you should talk about the new curriculum that the Minister of Education has introduced. Helen Arbour, principal at John Campbell Public School and one of 100 local education officials to receive official orientation, says she's received very positive response from teachers: "No one is questioning it.... We've just got the feeling we are in good shape."

Why didn't you quote that person from Windsor, Ontario, or thousands of others like her across the province of Ontario? They understand what we're doing. We're trying to improve the education system for our young people in Ontario.

#### VISITORS

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** I would like to take this opportunity to introduce to the House and Legislative Assembly that we have in the Speaker's gallery today Ms Eleanor Norrie, MLA for Truro-Bible Hill in Nova Scotia. Welcome.

#### PUBLIC HOUSING

**Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River):** I have a question to the Deputy Premier. This is about the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and the advisory report on social housing reform that he released yesterday. There were a lot of words in that report, but none of the words dealt with the central issue, which is your downloading of social housing costs on to municipal taxpayers. You know those taxpayers, municipal taxpayers.

I've got another report here done last November for the board of the Ontario Housing Corp. It says that the 84,000 units of public housing that you plan to download to municipalities need over \$530 million in repair work done to them over the next five years. Your government is dumping that \$530-million cost on to municipalities after only paying for \$69 million in repairs this past year and \$42 million in transition next year.

Minister, how can you say the download package is revenue-neutral when you're going to push off this \$530-million bill?

**Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance):** I am sure the leader of the third party would agree — well, maybe he wouldn't agree. Perhaps that's the wrong way to preface the question. I don't think there is any doubt that the social housing stock in this province has been deteriorating for many years now: not just the last two years, but for many years. That is exactly why this government asked a panel of experts to come forward with some recommendations.

I also would like to point out to the leader of the third party that the government understands, as part of the Who Does What exercise, that social housing stock needs to be upgraded. That's why we've set aside \$215 million above the \$100 million a year that is already in the budget to upgrade social housing stock.

1410

**Mr Hampton:** Let me do the math for the Deputy Premier. You put a total of \$100 million last year and this year and you say you might put up another \$200 million. Even giving you credit for that — we haven't seen that money but let's give you credit for that — it means municipalities are still going to be short over \$200 million on the social housing side alone.

If you read this report, it talks about paying for the cost of replacing doors and windows that are going to come to the end of their useful life in the next year or so. This is not luxury; this is about the fundamentals of someone's home, the fundamentals of having a door that works, windows that work etc.

Are you going to hand over the buildings and then watch them fall apart? Is that part of the strategy? No matter how you add it up, you're shortchanging the municipalities. You expect them to pick up at least \$200 million, probably closer to \$500 million. What are you going to do?

**Hon Mr Eves:** To the leader of the third party, not all municipalities in the province agree that turning over social housing to them is not the way to go. As a matter of

fact, I would refer you to the report of the Peel social housing authority. According to the report, the benefits of local control include "savings through staff restructuring, consolidation of administration, enhanced purchasing power, improved long-term maintenance, the elimination of confusion on the part of the public and easier complaint resolution."

Going to the regional municipality of Halton and their social housing body, they "have endorsed the concept of management of public housing stock by Halton Non-Profit Housing Corp, the municipal non-profit housing provider in our region," says the chair of that social housing corporation.

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Answer, please.

**Hon Mr Eves:** They are working with the province and with municipal governments to try to provide better social housing stock in the province, which, I might add, the federal government —

**The Speaker:** Thank you very much.

**Mr Hampton:** First the Deputy Premier tried selective figures and now he tries to cite selective authorities.

Deputy Premier, the mayors of the largest cities in Ontario were so upset about this issue that they demanded a meeting with the Premier and the Minister of Municipal Affairs. They got that meeting on August 11. The mayors say that the Premier promised them an independent study of housing costs. That's how worried the mayors of the large cities in this province are: They want an independent study. They believe you have forgotten that there is only one taxpayer in this province and that you're trying to shove it down on them so they take all the blame.

Your own report, even as selectively as you read it, says you're shortchanging them by hundreds of millions of dollars a year.

**The Speaker:** Question, please.

**Mr Hampton:** When are you going to give the mayors of the province the independent study of social housing costs so they can have some confidence that you're not shortchanging them to the tune of —

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

**Hon Mr Eves:** This government, more than any other government I can think of in the province's history, certainly understands that there is only one taxpayer. You don't want us to reduce taxes to taxpayers. You voted against legislation reducing taxes to taxpayers in the province.

I would like to talk to you about what the president of the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association has to say about the report. She welcomes yesterday's release of the report of the Advisory Council on Social Housing Reform. Margaret Singleton, president, was quoted as saying, "We believe the council's report points the way towards achieving much-needed reforms to social housing in this province."

I would say to the leader of the third party that we have supplied Who Does What numbers, including social housing, to the implementation team, comprised of municipal representatives. They have the numbers. They were made available to them last Thursday, as I recall. They are

available to the implementation teams and we are seeking their advice as to how we proceed.

**The Speaker:** New question, leader of the third party.

**Mr Hampton:** I would say to the Deputy Premier that the mayors of large cities want an independent study. You promised it and you should deliver it.

## AMBULANCE SERVICES

**Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River):** To the Minister of Health, you have your share of downloading as well. I want to ask you specifically about the downloading of ambulance services.

After January 1, 1998, ambulance services will be paid for from the property tax base. You won't pay for them any more; property taxpayers will pay. By January 1, 2000, the delivery of ambulance services — which means first-response emergency medical services — will have been taken over completely; they won't be part of the health care system any more.

You say none of this is going to be of concern, but I say to you that there are big issues here. The issues are the delivery of timely response and the training and qualifications of ambulance staff. The public of Ontario would like some assurances. Since you are taking ambulance services out of Ontario's health care system by making them a municipal service, how can you guarantee there will be trained and qualified —

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Thank you.

**Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health):** I say with all due respect that it's a very bizarre question, given that this Legislature is sited in the municipality that 100% runs the ambulance services, called Metro Toronto. They do an excellent job and they're known in North America as one of the better ambulance services. The province pays a portion, but the municipality pays the majority of costs in Metro Toronto. So we have a success story right here.

We also have a success story and an award given to the government recently because 90% of our ambulance officers in this province are now trained up to the paramedic level. No other jurisdiction in Canada can say the same.

**Mr Hampton:** This is indeed bizarre. This is a minister who's going to turn the ambulance services upside down and inside out, but he then tries to argue backwards and say that historically the system that is, is a good system. We agree: The system that is, is a good system. Why are you going to wreck it?

Minister, let me put it to you this way: There are supposed to be some regulations with this bill which point out what the responsibilities are going to be for training and qualifications. Why haven't we seen those regulations? Why haven't we seen clearly from you an indication of what the standards will be and who will be accountable for those standards? Why haven't we seen that yet?

These are very important details. In your system of health care that you're pushing us towards, good ambulance services are going to be more important than ever. People need to see the details. Who's going to be accountable for this? Who's going to ensure there are trained

ambulance attendants? Who's going to ensure that everybody meets qualifications? Can you answer that, please?

**Hon Mr Wilson:** We've made it clear on a number of occasions, and we've certainly made it clear with our municipal partners, that the ambulance standards of this province, which are among the highest in North America, will remain the same. The Ambulance Act will remain intact.

The reason there's no hidden agenda here and you haven't been able to find, as you say, the answers to your questions, is that we've been absolutely forthright from the beginning. We govern this place with a success story called Metro Toronto. What you fail to mention to the taxpayers — you mentioned in your last question the single taxpayer; I'll remind you that you can't just say that but you have to believe it and you have to do it. You sure didn't do it in your five years in office; you sure didn't believe it. What you have to believe is that there is waste and duplication now.

We're in the ambulance business, municipalities are in the ambulance business, the private sector is in the ambulance business. We need to streamline that and put every dollar towards enhancing our ambulance services, and I know our municipal partners are up to that. Maybe you and your party aren't up to this, but our municipal partners are up to the task.

**The Speaker:** Final supplementary, member for London Centre.

**Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre):** Currently, 90% of the province has the benefit of paramedics staffing those ambulances. These people are highly qualified. They have the ability to defibrillate, to administer narcotics and other powerful drugs, to perform surgical procedures like tracheotomies. Your ministry currently funds the training of those paramedics, but there is nothing to guarantee, and in fact your officials would not guarantee, that you would continue to fund after the year 2000, when you've downloaded these services on to the municipalities, the very essential training of paramedic ambulance attendants.

Given what you've said today about how the download will not affect the quality of the already excellent services in this province, will you commit today that your government will continue to fund the training of ambulance attendants in paramedicine?

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**Hon Mr Wilson:** We don't intend in any way to disrupt the success we've had with that program. That's a commitment from the government. We're at 90% now; we're aiming for 100% in the province. We're currently working out with our municipal partners how that will occur; it requires money. Obviously, we're working with our partners to make sure that happens.

Don't forget, though, that we've freed up over \$2 billion off the property tax by the province taking 50% of the education tax. There's a significant amount of money there from our single taxpayer, which you say you believe in, to help out with these programs. I tell you that the commitment is there and that we're having the discussions

with our partners right now. It would be premature to say who pays for what.

We have said in other areas, where we have to ensure that we maintain provincial standards and the excellence we have — we have said in public health, with the announcement of our healthy babies program — that yes this government is willing to pay for, as part of the new arrangements, province-wide programs. We're having those discussions with respect to ambulances and municipalities right now.

## ONTARIO HYDRO

**Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew North):** My question is to the Minister of Energy. It was three weeks ago that Ontario Hydro publicly indicated that it had received a report that contained some very serious criticisms of the operating standards and deficiencies of its nuclear power reactors. Shortly thereafter, senior Hydro management outlined its so-called recovery plan, a plan which was indicated to cost something then in the range of between \$5 billion and \$8 billion.

Minister, are you confident that Hydro's so-called recovery plan is in fact going to do the job and have you taken any steps to have independent assessment and evaluation of Hydro's recovery plan?

**Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Environment and Energy):** As I mentioned before, this is a recovery plan put forward by Ontario Hydro. They are still in the stages of producing data to my officials to justify the decisions that have been made. I will be consulting with them and the AECB, which I've asked to comment on the recovery plan to ensure that my primary concern, that is, that the safety of these nuclear reactors be improved, actually takes place.

Therefore, we are in the process of still receiving data from them and will decide at that point in time how best to deal with those data. I've asked those who I believe are the greatest experts in terms of nuclear safety in Canada, and that is the AECB, for their advice and will be relying very heavily upon it.

**Mr Conway:** Safety is obviously one very important aspect of this debate, but cost, particularly for alternative energy, is going to be another very important aspect of this. The news over the last couple of weeks suggests that the plan changes every day. The plan was announced three weeks ago. It was supposed to cost between \$5 billion and \$8 billion. Now we find out that it's gone up by at least \$1.5 billion in just a few days and there are reports this week that the real cost has been understated by several billions of dollars.

My question to you on behalf of the taxpayers and ratepayers of Ontario is, since the Hydrocrats, the people who gave us this mess in the first place, have themselves developed the recovery plan, and since their credibility is not all the best these days, have you as Minister of Energy undertaken steps to independently assess whether or not this so-called recovery plan developed by Hydro manage-

ment is a good deal and the best deal, not just on safety but on cost, for hydro ratepayers and Ontario taxpayers?

**Hon Mr Sterling:** As the member knows, I have talked with him and the critic for the third party and we are in the throes of setting up a legislative committee to have a public process with regard to examining this particular plan. But the answer is yes. I have, along with my colleague, the finance minister, been looking at the recovery plan from not only the safety standpoint but from the financial aspect as well and will be engaging different kinds of experts to deal with that.

As I mentioned in my previous response, I am relying of course to a great extent on the AECB in terms of the safety aspect of this plan, because it is very difficult to get that kind of expertise even worldwide.

So the answer is yes. We are looking at their plan with financial experts, and I, along with my colleague the finance minister, am looking into the economic soundness of this plan.

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** New question, the member for Nickel Belt.

**Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt):** My question is to the Minister of Energy on the same matter raised by my colleague from Renfrew North. In the last couple of weeks the estimates for this recovery plan, designed by the same people who got Hydro into the problem it's in now, have gone from a little over \$5 billion to somewhere in the ether of \$10 billion and still counting. How can you possibly have any confidence in those numbers given the fact they're coming from the same people who got you into this jackpot?

Since it's a couple of weeks since you talked to the critics in the opposition parties, will you now reconsider your decision to appoint a legislative committee, which will be dominated by government members, and instead appoint an independent commission or inquiry to look into the whole matter of how we got into this mess with Hydro and where we go from here, which is even more important?

**Hon Mr Sterling:** The member will know that his leader asked the same question. My response to it is the same as my response to him. I believe that, number one, members of the Legislature and the public should have an open process where they can be involved in dealing with the recovery plan, making their comments with regard to it.

The second and most important part is that because there is such a significant safety component with regard to this plan, timeliness is very important. My hesitation with going to another mode of inquiry or investigation is that the timeliness of an inquiry is normally a lot longer than it is with regard to a legislative committee. I've indicated to my colleagues that we cannot wait on some of these decisions. We must take some decisions in the near future. Therefore, I believe this is the best mode to get those decisions made, and made in a reasonable manner.

**Mr Laughren:** No doubt you believe that, but I must say to you, Minister, that it's two weeks ago, more than that, since you actually talked to the critics. If you're so

concerned about timeliness, we have still not seen the terms of reference for this legislative committee. We don't think it should even be a legislative committee, quite frankly, but what's holding up the terms of reference? The last thing the people in this province need, and quite frankly the last thing any of us want to see, is some kind of whitewash of the problems surrounding Ontario Hydro.

I ask the minister once again, in view of the fact that you seem to be so concerned about timeliness on this issue, why have you not given us the terms of reference so we can look at them and make sure that they're complete, that the terms of reference cover everything that needs to be covered concerning the problems surrounding Ontario Hydro and particularly the nuclear division? I ask the minister, finally, will you now make a commitment to examine the possibility of an independent inquiry into the operations of Ontario Hydro?

**Hon Mr Sterling:** I believe I made my position clear before. I'm working with the House leader to work out the terms of this particular committee so that it can work in conjunction with other committees of the Legislature, so that it will have the necessary time to examine this very, very important issue in detail and come up with significant recommendations, which I will take seriously and we as a government will take seriously in making decisions as to how this particular problem, which you know has been evolving over a long period of time, can be solved.

This will perhaps be the most enlightening process with regard to Ontario Hydro that we have ever had in this Legislature, seeing the two issues of not only the significant safety report, which is our primary focus, but also the fact the government has indicated that electricity restructuring is on the horizon. These two issues will converge together so that the legislative committee will have a real opportunity to get hold of this issue once and for all.

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## PORT WELLER DRY DOCKS

**Mr Tom Froese (St Catharines-Brock):** My question is to the Minister of Transportation. As my riding of St Catharines-Brock includes the Great Lakes, the Welland Canal and the St Lawrence Seaway, naturally my constituents and I are interested in shipping issues. I understand that the federal government will be giving millions of dollars in assistance to the port of Churchill in Manitoba. Will the federal government be making any assistance available to Ontario facilities such as Port Weller Dry Docks in St Catharines?

**Hon Al Palladini (Minister of Transportation):** I want to thank my colleague from St Catharines-Brock for that question because it is very important. To answer your question very directly, no, Ontario is not getting any funding from the federal government. One of the things that is happening, however, is that it seems the federal government is going to be investing over \$40 million through the port of Churchill, Manitoba. They have decided to do so despite the fact that this particular port has a shipping season of only 14 weeks and much of the rail

line that the federal government is subsidizing is built over permafrost and is unsuitable for conventional hopper cars.

The port would require one million tonnes of grain per year to cover its operating and capital costs, yet this port over the past 10 years has averaged barely over 285,000.

**Mr Froese:** I'm very concerned, like all Ontarians, that the federal government is not reinvesting Ontario tax dollars back into Ontario communities. Can the minister advise the House what he intends to do about this situation?

**Hon Mr Palladini:** I have written to the federal Minister of Transport to express my opposition to using federal dollars to support one province over another. I feel that is not the right way to go about doing things. I will also be speaking to our own Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs to see what can be done to get fair treatment for Ontario. I'm really glad that the local MP in the Thunder Bay area, Mr Joe Comuzzi, has expressed his opposition to this move by the federal government.

At this time, I'd like to encourage my colleagues here in the House from Port Arthur and Fort William to speak up for Ontario. Let's make sure that Ontario gets its fair share when it comes to special projects.

#### FIRE IN HAMILTON

**Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East):** My question is to the Minister of Environment. I have a copy of an environmental site assessment report that was prepared for your ministry in January 1997, previous to the fire on the Plastimet site. This environmental assessment report showed at that time that copper was 20 times higher than the minimum acceptable level. It showed that lead was 50 times higher than the minimum level. The same report showed that zinc was 60 times higher than the level.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Members, can you come to order, please. Thank you

**Mr Agostino:** This report showed that three very toxic, dangerous metals were present on the site and you were aware of it at least in January 1997.

Can you outline for the House what steps your ministry took when you were aware of this report in order to protect the residents, the kids near the site, the individuals who worked on that site and the environment? Can you outline those steps for the House today?

**Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Environment and Energy):** Because this is a very specific question, I can't outline all of what my ministry did with regard to this report. It's my understanding that the ministry looked at the site with regard to whether or not any of these materials would be moving off the site because of rain or emissions or anything of that nature. They then looked at the locations of these particular substances and I believe determined that this particular business, if these materials were isolated from the other parts of the business, could be carried on in a safe manner. That's my understanding. I would of course like to have the opportunity to stand

corrected when I would be able to talk to my officials in a very specific manner on a very technical question.

**Mr Agostino:** This is not a technical question. This was a site assessment that your ministry asked for. Clearly it showed three very high levels of materials, of metals, that are dangerous. The levels of lead went from 50 before the fire to 60 afterwards. A number of steps were taken to secure the site.

Nothing was done, when your ministry became aware, to secure the site. Kids were playing next door. Kids had access to that site. Workers who worked for Plastimet were exposed to the site, were exposed to lead levels 50 times the acceptable level, copper and zinc levels that were high and exceeded the minimum standards of any industrial site across Ontario.

Your ministry failed to notify the residents of this danger. You failed to notify the workers on the site. You failed to ask the company to secure the site. You exposed this community in January 1997, prior to the fire, to these dangerous levels of these chemicals, to these dangerous metals, without taking any proactive action.

**The Speaker:** Question, please.

**Mr Agostino:** It is unconscionable, and I ask you again today to come clean. Tell the people of Hamilton why you kept this information from them and why you —

**The Speaker:** Thank you very much. Minister of Environment and Energy.

**Hon Mr Sterling:** I do not know that this information was kept from anybody. I believe the report was a public report.

As I understand it, these particular materials were in the subsurface and therefore were of no danger to anyone on the surface of the property. There are many sites in Ontario where there are contaminants in the soil from previous industrial use years and years and years ago. Accepted environmental practice is to cap off these particular sites and use them for some kind of limited purposes.

This particular fire would not have occurred had the fire code been lived up to in the city of Hamilton. The problem relates to the cause of the fire. The fire was not caused by any environmental report or environmental reaction to this. The fire was caused by the fact that there weren't sprinklers there and the code was not followed.

#### CHARITABLE GAMING

**Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie):** My question is for the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism in the hopes that today I might get an answer instead of a lecture.

Yesterday I tried to get some answers about why this government won't listen to the small businesses involved in charity casinos. Today, let's move on to another group of small business owners who are trying to get your attention: the companies that work with charities to distribute break-open tickets, sometimes called Nevada tickets. Your government is in such a hurry to grab more gambling revenues that you're going to put these companies out of

business as of October 15. These small businesses are trying to tell you that your plans will be bad for charities, bad for competition and bad for Ontario. Why won't you listen to them?

**Hon William Saunderson (Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism):** I'm very happy to respond to the question from the member for Sault Ste Marie. First of all, as he knows, we are going through an examination of the Ontario Lottery Corp, and they provide all the supplies that are needed to play the various games. I have to say to the member that he should know this review is going on, and we expect a final report by approximately the middle of November.

On small business, there is no reason why small businesses that provide services to the gaming industry cannot compete with the bigger businesses. I just can't understand why he keeps referring to this question all the time. This government, as I said yesterday, has done more for small businesses, whether it's providing gaming materials or whatever, than any government in recent history.

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**Mr Martin:** This question wasn't about the lottery corporation. Your plan re the break-open tickets, Nevada tickets, calls for allowing one manufacturer and one distributor of break-open tickets after October 15. Roughly 60 companies that have been licensed in this field will have to close their doors and put their employees on the street. So much for this government's commitment to competition.

You would rather grab more gambling revenues than take the time to listen to the businesses in the break-open ticket industry. They could explain to you how this is going to cost charities more while putting more money into the government's pocket. It amounts to twisted logic for a government which has a minister for privatization to wipe out 60 companies in a competitive industry and replace them with a government-licensed monopoly. What will it take to slow you down and make you listen to these people?

**Hon Mr Saunderson:** In response to the supplementary question, I would like to say to the member that I would like to discuss this matter further with my associate Mr Tsubouchi, who is not here today, and we will come back and talk to you about this matter at a later time.

## AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

**Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa):** My question as well is for the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism. Employment remains an important issue in my constituency, the riding of Oshawa, as well as in the entire province. As you are aware, Oshawa has a strong automotive manufacturing base which in 1995 employed the equivalent of over one third of Oshawa's labour force. Automotive manufacturing directly accounts for 85.6% of the goods manufacturing jobs. This makes the status of Ontario's automotive industry a significant issue in my riding of Oshawa.

Recently, I've been hearing conflicting reports about the level of production in the automotive industry, and some of my constituents have expressed some concern. Could the minister clarify the status of the automotive industry in Ontario for my constituents?

**Hon William Saunderson (Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism):** I'd like to respond to the question from the member for Oshawa. It's a very good question. I want to say that the auto industry globally is going through some very major restructuring because of the various market needs. There may be some reductions in some areas as far as workforces are concerned, but there are many, many expansions taking place in other areas.

The Canadian Vehicle Manufacturers' Association says that the vehicle assembly sector is headed for a record production year in Ontario. Vehicle production is up 8.5%, following a record production last year of 2.3 million units, and Canadian consumers have pushed auto sales up 16% over the first seven months in 1997. Total auto assembly employment stands at 45,000, which is a large number.

Last week we met with the Canadian Vehicle Manufacturers' Association here at Queen's Park, and I'm happy to say that they said \$1.8 billion in new automotive manufacturing investment is being made in Canada.

**Mr Ouellette:** The parts industry is also a significant employer in Oshawa and the region of Durham, supplying several thousand skilled jobs. I have toured the local PPG, A. G. Simpson and other parts manufacturing facilities and have seen the auto parts industry undergoing significant restructuring over the past several years as greater demands have been made from global competitive markets. My constituents are just as concerned about the auto parts industry as they are with the auto manufacturing industry. Can you outline the state of the auto parts industry for my constituents?

**Hon Mr Saunderson:** In response to the supplementary, I'm very happy to say that the auto parts sector is certainly growing at a very fast pace. Shipments are about 10% ahead of what they were last year and the employment in this sector is up 4%, at about 85,000 workers. There has certainly been a new surge in auto investments. Since the beginning of this year, 1997, there have been at least six new auto plants opening in Ontario, and the Bank of Nova Scotia reports that the Canadian content in North American vehicles has doubled in the last 10 years, so that partly accounts for the development.

The auto industry is booming, and I think it's going to continue. I'd like to say that I'm happy to have had the chance to have an opportunity to provide an update on a very, very important industry in Ontario. It creates a lot of jobs and a lot of economic development. We should all be very proud of this industry and encourage it.

## SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

**Mr Pat Hoy (Essex-Kent):** My question is to the Minister of Transportation. For two years I've been

working on legislation to protect children. Bill 78 received the unanimous support of this Legislature almost a year ago and was referred to the resources development committee. Democracy demands that Bill 78 be heard.

Bill 78 puts teeth into a law that is supposed to protect children. It gives the law a mechanism for convictions which are not being made now. You know that driver identification is the problem. You can crow about school bus measures in your bill. Nobody is fooled. The only thing you have done is raise fines. If you cannot convict, fine levels are irrelevant.

Over 30,000 Ontario citizens signed a petition which I presented to you supporting vehicle liability. They want Bill 78 to be given the same chance as bills by government members Froese and Ross. They were heard in committee within a month.

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Question, please.

**Mr Hoy:** What are you afraid of, Minister? When are you going to allow Bill 78 to go forward to the resources development committee?

**Hon Al Palladini (Minister of Transportation):** I've acknowledged the member in the House for his contribution through his bill. This government also reacted and certainly incorporated portions of his bill into our new road safety bill.

I want to say to the member that we are committed to making sure that safety is practised on our highways. Our children are very important to us, and I believe we have addressed certain concerns. There's still a lot more to do, and I certainly appreciate the member's comments, but we want to target the driver, not the owner of the vehicle. This has been the government's agenda all along. That's why we got rid of photo-radar, because all it was was a tax grab. We want to make sure that we target the driver, the culprit, not the vehicle, and until we can do that, we will not be able to accommodate the member.

**Mr Hoy:** Protecting children's lives is not a tax grab. Minister, quit stalling. Eleven children have been killed and over 80 injured in the past 10 years by careless drivers who ignore school bus warning lights. Yesterday, CBC television in Windsor filmed two vehicles that flagrantly passed a bus with its signals activated, one car after the other.

You're not kidding anybody. Your bill is a failure. Most of the convictions which do occur each year happen during the back-to-school police blitz. The police cannot follow 16,000 school buses day after day to make their convictions. If fines are not a deterrent, as witnessed in Windsor on the first day of a new school year with all your media hype and a police blitz under way, face the facts, Minister: Your bill is not protecting Ontario's school children. When will you introduce vehicle liability?

**Hon Mr Palladini:** When the member's party was in government, I'd certainly like to see what they did. But the Ministry of Transportation is continually working with the school busing industry. The resources committee dealt with vehicle liability, and it was defeated. We are on the right track. We want to target the culprit, not the vehicle.

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## NATIVE LAND CLAIM

**Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River):** I have a question to the minister responsible for native affairs. I've raised this issue before, as you know, concerning the Big Grassy First Nation and the provincial highway which crosses that first nation. There is a bridge which has been in very serious condition for some time. The first nation has come to the table and they have worked very hard to get an agreement in principle so that bridge can be replaced.

Imagine their surprise when they talk to your government and find out, after doing all their hard work in terms of reaching a settlement over that bridge, that your government is not prepared now to replace the bridge. Your government is going to insist that local people, tourists who come to the area, continue to drive over a bridge which has only one lane and which your own people tell you is unsafe. Can you tell me why? They've done the work; they've come to the table. Why aren't you going to replace the bridge?

**Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs):** It's my understanding that a negotiation has taken place at Big Grassy to determine the ownership of certain lands there. I believe a land claim settlement is at hand and I hope we will very shortly be in a position to announce that.

I think it's the intention of the Ministry of Transportation to initially go in and assess the bridge — we haven't been able to do that up to this point in time — and to then determine how to make the bridge as safe as it possibly can be made, temporarily, while design is taken a look at for the ultimate replacement of that bridge. That's my understanding.

**Mr Hampton:** Minister, that's not good enough. This is a bridge which thousands of people cross every spring. The primary industry of that part of Ontario is the tourism industry. Local school buses cross it, local people have to cross it every day, and thousands of tourists have to cross it.

Your government has literally delayed this process for two years. We were very close to an agreement two years ago. The first nation wants to know — they've reached an agreement — why you're not now going to replace the bridge. Let me put it to you. The first nation will go out and borrow the money to begin replacing the bridge this fall. If you will agree to reimburse them next spring, they will go out and they will get the money, they will get the engineering firm to replace that bridge this fall so that people don't have to travel under an unsafe bridge. What's your answer?

**Hon Mr Harnick:** Certainly I can tell you that there was nowhere close to an agreement on this particular issue two years ago. I can tell you as well that we have worked very hard to come to an agreement in principle on the land issues so we would then be in a position to deal with the repair and ultimate replacement of the bridge. That is my understanding in terms of the sequence of events that the

Ministry of Transportation has to undergo to ultimately replace the bridge.

It was originally a two-lane bridge; it is now down to one lane because of the safety issue. It has been a one-lane bridge because it has been deemed to be safe and now the Ministry of Transportation, because the land claim issues have been able to be resolved, will be in a position to deal with the Big Grassy bridge.

### TRAFFIC SIGNAL

**Mr Tim Hudak (Niagara South):** My question is to the Minister of Transportation, and it concerns the need for a traffic signal at Highway 58 and Northland Avenue in Port Colborne. As the minister knows, this is a growing area in the city of Port Colborne, a growing city, that has seen an increase in traffic volume. The intersection is in a residential neighbourhood, with a home for the aged, an elementary school and a home for the disabled. Unfortunately, a very serious accident occurred last night. My thoughts go out to the teenage pedestrians who were involved in the accident, and their families, at this difficult time.

Councillor Bea Kenny in Port Colborne has had remarkable foresight on this issue and has called for a traffic signal at that intersection since being elected. I have joined with her in her campaign now for about a year or more to bring that light to that intersection. My question to the minister is, can he make a commitment on the changes he will make to that intersection to improve the safety at Highway 58 and Northland Avenue in Port Colborne and the time frame when the light can go up in that city?

**Hon Al Palladini (Minister of Transportation):** I certainly thank the member for Niagara South for the question. I am sure the member knows this government's commitment to safety on our highways. I agree that this particular intersection currently has only a stop sign at the cross street. With the increased traffic volumes, certainly it is necessary to install traffic signals. Installing these traffic signals will reduce motorists' delay and also assist pedestrians attempting to cross the road. I would like to assure my colleague that the signal design is well under way and construction is going to be scheduled for the early part of the year.

### PETITIONS

#### HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

**Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William):** I have a petition addressed to the Parliament of Ontario.

"Whereas the undersigned residents living in the city of Thunder Bay in northwestern Ontario are in need of a new regional acute care hospital situated in the city of Thunder Bay to provide the said residents with quality health care services in a modern and up-to-date acute care hospital; and

"Whereas the partial renovation and restructuring of the existing Port Arthur General Hospital, a 65-year-old outdated and antiquated hospital building, proposed by the health services review commission and the Minister of Health for the province of Ontario will not be suitable, adequate or proper to provide such quality health care services to the said residents; and

"Whereas the undersigned residents endorse and support the Thunder Bay Regional Hospital and the trustees of the hospital board and their vision of a new centrally located hospital to serve the northwestern Ontario region;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario to reverse the decision and direction of the health services review commission and the Minister of Health to have all acute care services for the city of Thunder Bay and northwestern Ontario region delivered from the renovated and restructured site of Port Arthur General Hospital and to endorse and approve capital funding to build a new centrally located acute care hospital in the city of Thunder Bay."

I have a petition signed by literally hundreds of my constituents. I have affixed my signature in full agreement.

### FIRE IN HAMILTON

**Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre):** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas a fire at a PVC plastic vinyl plant located in the middle of one of Hamilton's residential areas burned for three days; and

"Whereas the city of Hamilton declared a state of emergency and called for a limited voluntary evacuation of several blocks around the site; and

"Whereas the burning of PVC results in the formation and release of toxic substances such as dioxins and furans, as well as large quantities of heavy metals and other dangerous chemicals;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to hold a full public inquiry on the Hamilton Plastimet fire; and

"Further, we, the undersigned, request that the Ministry of Environment and the government of Ontario take responsibility for the immediate cleanup of the fire site."

On behalf of my constituents, I add my name to theirs.

### CORRECTION

**Mr John C. Cleary (Cornwall):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: On August 27 I read a petition to the Legislative Assembly regarding the court decision on women going topless in Ontario. I would like to take the opportunity to make a correction. The Hansard notes read the petition had 130 signatures while in fact it 1,030 signatures. Thank you.

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** That is not a point of order, but I certainly will look to see it corrected.

## COURT DECISION

**Mr Bob Wood (London South):** I have a petition signed by 200 people. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the courts have ruled that women have the lawful right to go topless in public; and

"Whereas the Liberal government of Canada has the power to change the Criminal Code to reinstate such public nudity as an offence;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the government of Ontario to pass a bill empowering municipalities to enact bylaws governing dress code and to continue to urge the government of Canada to pass legislation to reinstate such partial nudity as an offence."

1500

## IPPERWASH PROVINCIAL PARK

**Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough North):** To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas many questions concerning the events preceding, during and after the fatal shooting of Anthony Dudley George on September 6, 1995, at Ipperwash Provincial Park, where over 200 armed officers were sent to control 25 unarmed men and women have not been answered;

"Whereas the officers involved in the beating of Bernard George were not held responsible for their actions; and

"Whereas the Ontario Provincial Police refused to cooperate with the special investigations unit in recording the details of that night; and

"Whereas the influence and communications of Lambton MPP Marcel Beaubien with the government have been verified through transcripts presented in the Legislature; and

"Whereas the trust of the portfolio of native affairs held by Attorney General Charles Harnick is compromised by his continual refusal for a full public inquiry into the events at Ipperwash; and

"Whereas the promised return of Camp Ipperwash to the Stony Point Nation by the federal Ministry of Defence and the serious negotiations of land claims by both the provincial and federal governments could have avoided a conflict;

"We, the undersigned, request that a full public inquiry be held into the events surrounding the fatal shooting of Dudley George on September 6, 1995, to eliminate all misconceptions held by and about the government, the OPP and the Stony Point people."

I affix my signature to this petition.

## LONG-TERM CARE

**Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre):** I have a petition to the Honourable Lieutenant Governor and the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the provincial government is abandoning its responsibility to provide good care for people who live in

long-term-care facilities by defunding and deregulating the sector; and

"Whereas the resulting staffing shortages lead to loss of quality care, decreased resident security and more workplace injuries; and

"Whereas the selloff to for-profit operators of the care for our frail elderly residents raises questions about accountability, accessibility, working conditions and quality of care and pits frail residents against robust profits; and

"Whereas the provincial government has a responsibility to ensure that funding, staffing and standards provide a level of care which promotes dignity and respect for those who live and work in long-term-care facilities;

"We, the following undersigned citizens of Ontario, beg leave to petition the Parliament of Ontario to provide adequate funding for the care of residents in long-term-care facilities, to establish and enforce provincial standards for care in Ontario long-term-care facilities and to impose a moratorium on the selloff of care for vulnerable residents to the for-profit sector."

There are approximately 25 of these petitions, each signed by 10 individuals, and I'm proud to affix my signature.

## EDUCATION REFORM

**Mr Tony Ruprecht (Parkdale):** I have a petition addressed to the assembly of Ontario.

"We believe that the heart of education in our province is the relationship between student and teacher and that this human relation dimension should be maintained and extended in any proposed reform. The Minister of Education and Training should know how strongly we oppose many of the secondary school reform recommendations being proposed by your ministry and government; and

"We recognize and support the need to review secondary education in Ontario. The proposal for reform as put forward by your ministry is substantially flawed in several key areas: (a) reduced instructional time, (b) reduction in instruction in English, (c) reduction of qualified teaching personnel, (d) academic work experience credit not linked to education curriculum, (e) devaluation of formal education.

"We therefore strongly urge your ministry to delay the implementation of secondary school reform so that all interested stakeholders — parents, students, school councils, trustees and teachers — are able to participate in a more meaningful consultation process which will help ensure that a high quality of publicly funded education is provided."

I am proud to affix my signature to this document.

## HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

**Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine):** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas over half the people in Ontario are women and only 5% of the money spent on medical research goes to research in women's health; and

"Women have special medical needs since their bodies are not the same as men's; and

"Women's College is the only hospital in Ontario with a primary mandate giving priority to research and treatment dedicated to women's health needs; and

"The World Health Organization has named Women's College Hospital as the sole collaborating centre for women's health for both North and South America; and

"Without Women's College Hospital, the women of Ontario and of the world will lose a health resource that cannot be duplicated anywhere;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to ensure the continuance, independence, women-centred focus and accessible downtown location of the one hospital most crucial to the future of women's health."

I am in complete agreement with this and I have affixed my signature to it as well.

#### IPPERWASH PROVINCIAL PARK

**Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming):** To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas many questions concerning the events preceding, during and after the fatal shooting of Anthony Dudley George on September 6, 1995, at Ipperwash Provincial Park where over 200 armed officers were sent to control 25 unarmed men and women have not been answered; and

"Whereas the officers involved in the beating of Bernard George were not held responsible for their actions; and

"Whereas the Ontario Provincial Police refused to co-operate with the Special Investigations Unit in recording the details of that night; and

"Whereas the influence and communications of Lambton MPP Marcel Beaubien with the government have been verified through transcripts presented in the Legislature; and

"Whereas the trust of the portfolio of native affairs held by Attorney General Charles Harnick is compromised by his continued refusal for a full public inquiry into the events at Ipperwash; and

"Whereas the promised return of Camp Ipperwash to the Stony Point Nation by the federal Ministry of Defence and the serious negotiation of land claims by both the provincial and federal government could have avoided a conflict;

"We, the undersigned, request that a full public inquiry be held into the events surrounding the fatal shooting of Dudley George on September 6, 1995, to eliminate all misconceptions held by and about the government, the OPP and the Stony Point people."

#### LONG-TERM CARE

**Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East):** I have a petition addressed to the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor and the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the provincial government is abandoning its responsibility to provide good care for people who live in long-term-care facilities by defunding and deregulating the sector; and

"Whereas the resulting staffing shortages have led to a loss of quality of care, decreased resident security and more workplace injuries; and

"Whereas the sell-off to for-profit operators of the care of our frail elderly residents raises questions about accountability, accessibility, working conditions and quality of care and pits frail residents against robust profits; and

"Whereas the provincial government has had a responsibility to ensure that funding, staffing and standards provide a level of care which promotes dignity and respect for those who live and work in long-term-care facilities;

"We, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, beg leave to petition the Parliament of Ontario to provide adequate funding for the care of residents in long-term-care facilities, to establish and enforce provincial standards for care in Ontario long-term-care facilities, and to impose a moratorium on the sell-off of care for vulnerable residents to the for-profit sector."

This is signed by 60 residents of the province of Ontario, and I have affixed my signature to it.

#### CREMATORIUM IN VAUGHAN

**Mr Mario Sergio (Yorkview):** I have yet another petition from residents in my area which is addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas an application has been submitted to the Ministry of Environment and Energy for a certificate of approval for the development of a crematorium and a columbarium at the northeast corner of Jane Street and Steeles Avenue West in the city of Vaughan; and

"Whereas the residents who live in close proximity to this proposed crematorium are extremely concerned about the harmful environmental effects resulting from the emissions to the atmosphere, they seriously fear the spread of contaminants from this planned six-furnace high-rise crematorium and are alarmed about the long-term effects on their health; and

"Whereas there is a further apprehension in this high-density residential community that due to budget considerations and cutbacks, the Ministry of Environment and Energy will not take the time to effectively, openly and fairly listen to, consider and assess the community's concern on the huge ramifications;

"Therefore we, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"We call upon the Ministry of Environment and Energy, which has the primary responsibility for protecting and enhancing a healthful environment for the present and future wellbeing of the people of Ontario, to:

"(1) recognize that we, the citizens most adversely affected by this proposal, have the right to participate in government decision-making;

"(2) honour its commitment to safeguard our environment and therefore reject this proposal for a crematorium of such a large scale and literally at our doorsteps;

"(3) acknowledge that the health of thousands of residents will be at risk and thereby refuse to grant approval for this project."

I concur with the contents and I will affix my signature to it.

### HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

**Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine):** I have today a number of petitions in a series of ongoing petitions with respect to Wellesley Central Hospital. These are signed by over 600 individuals who are of the Wellesley Central Hospital Staying Alive campaign. The petition reads as follows:

"We, the undersigned, are opposed to the decision of closing Wellesley Central Hospital.

"We see this as cutting services which will negatively affect the overall health of our community.

"We are deeply concerned about our future health care for the treatment of acute illness and for emergency care.

"We support the alliance between Wellesley Central Hospital and Women's College Hospital as the only solution."

I am in complete agreement with them and I have affixed my signature to these petitions.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley):** Further petitions?

**Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South):** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly:

"We, the undersigned, are opposed to the decision of closing Wellesley Central Hospital.

"We see this as cutting services which will negatively affect the overall health of our community.

"We are deeply concerned about our future health care for the treatment of acute illness and for emergency care.

"We support the alliance between Wellesley Central Hospital and Women's College Hospital as the only solution."

I present these 326 signatures as part of the 60,000 signatures collected by the Wellesley campaign and affix my signature.

### PUBLIC SERVICE AND LABOUR RELATIONS REFORMS

**Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William):** To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Harris government's Bill 136 will effectively suspend all labour relations rights for municipal, health and school board employees affected by provincially forced amalgamations; and

"Whereas the Harris government's Bill 136 will hurt average workers in every community across Ontario including nurses, teachers, firemen and police officers; and

"Whereas the Harris government's bill will decrease the quality of health care as well as the quality of education delivered in Ontario; and

"Whereas the Harris government's Bill 136 was designed to provide the government with sweeping powers to override long-standing labour negotiation rights for workers including the right to negotiate, the right to strike, the right to seek binding arbitration and the right to choose a bargaining unit;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, support our MPP Lyn McLeod in her opposition to this legislation and join her in calling upon the Harris government to repeal Bill 136 which creates a climate of confrontation in Ontario."

This is signed by 85 people in my constituency and I've affixed my signature.

### ORDERS OF THE DAY

#### SUPPLY ACT, 1997

#### LOI DE CRÉDITS DE 1997

Resuming the adjourned debate on the motion for third reading of Bill 143, An Act to authorize the payment of certain amounts for the Public Service for the fiscal year ending on March 31, 1997 / *Projet de loi 143, Loi autorisant le paiement de certaines sommes destinées à la fonction publique pour l'exercice se terminant le 31 mars 1997.*

**The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley):** Further debate? Seeing there is no further debate, I will put the question.

Ms Bassett has moved third reading of Bill 143. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

Those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members; a 30-minute bell.

*The division bells rang from 1513 to 1537.*

**The Acting Speaker:** Would the members please take their seats.

All those in favour of the bill, please stand one at a time.

#### Ayes

Amott, Ted	Froese, Tom	Newman, Dan
Baird, John R.	Galt, Doug	O'Toole, John
Bassett, Isabel	Grimmett, Bill	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Beaubien, Marcel	Hamick, Charles	Parker, John L.
Carr, Gary	Hastings, John	Pettit, Trevor
Carroll, Jack	Hodgson, Chris	Ross, Lillian
Chudleigh, Ted	Hudak, Tim	Runciman, Robert W.
Cunningham, Dianne	Jackson, Cameron	Saunderson, William
Danford, Harry	Johns, Helen	Shea, Derwyn
Doyle, Ed	Johnson, David	Smith, Bruce
Ecker, Janet	Jordan, W. Leo	Spina, Joseph
Elliott, Brenda	Klees, Frank	Stewart, R. Gary
Eves, Ernie L.	Martiniuk, Gerry	Tumbull, David
Fisher, Barbara	Maves, Bart	Villeneuve, Noble
Flaherty, Jim	McLean, Allan K.	Wilson, Jim
Ford, Douglas B.	Munro, Julia	Witmer, Elizabeth
Fox, Gary	Mushinski, Marilyn	Wood, Bob

**The Acting Speaker:** All those opposed, please stand one at a time.

#### Nays

Bartolucci, Rick  
Boyd, Marion  
Bradley, James J.  
Brown, Michael A.  
Christopherson, David  
Cleary, John C.  
Crozier, Bruce  
Curling, Alvin  
Hampton, Howard

Hoy, Pat  
Kormos, Peter  
Kwinter, Monte  
Laughren, Floyd  
Martel, Shelley  
Martin, Tony  
McLeod, Lyn  
Miclash, Frank  
Patten, Richard

Phillips, Gerry  
Pouliot, Gilles  
Pupatello, Sandra  
Ramsay, David  
Ruprecht, Tony  
Sergio, Mario  
Silipo, Tony  
Wildman, Bud  
Wood, Len

**Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers):** The ayes are 51; the nays are 27.

**The Acting Speaker:** I declare the motion carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

### GASOLINE PRICES

**Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Government House Leader):** I am pleased to read government notice of motion number 31, the resolution on gas pricing:

Whereas the gasoline pricing practices of large supplier/retailers continues to be a problem which threatens consumers with unreasonably high and non-transparent prices and undermines the important role played by independent gasoline retailers in Ontario; and

Whereas gasoline pricing is an issue of common interest to all provincial governments and Canadian consumers; and

Whereas ensuring fair competition in the marketplace is the responsibility of the federal government under the Competition Act; and

Whereas this Legislature has already unanimously passed a resolution calling on the federal government to exercise fully its powers under the Competition Act to stop anti-competitive practices that threaten the survival of small, independent gasoline retailers; and

Whereas the federal competition bureau is of the opinion that no marketplace problems exist in the gasoline industry which violate the Competition Act as currently drafted;

Be it resolved by this House that the government of Ontario call upon the federal government to address this problem of national dimensions by amending the Competition Act to address pricing practices within the gasoline industry and appoint a special investigator to review the situation and make recommendations to ensure that Canadian consumers benefit from competitive and transparent gasoline prices across this country.

Be it further resolved that the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations table the resolution of this Legislature at the forthcoming meeting of federal-provincial-territorial ministers emphasizing the support of all parties in this House.

My comments will be short. I will be sharing my speaking time with the member for Hamilton West, the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations, who unfortunately is absent today and would very much wish to be part of this; and the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale and the member for Brampton North.

I would encourage all members of this House to support this resolution, particularly those members who for some time have known that it is the annual rite, I suppose, that the gasoline prices go up. The consumers of Ontario are very rightly upset by that practice, and it appears to have no logic, rhyme or reason other than the fact that it takes more money out of their pockets. I'm sure that when the NDP was in power, when the Liberals were in power, the same situation presented itself.

We have a resolution which calls upon the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations to take the resolution of this House to a meeting of ministers which will take place next week. We'd like him to go armed with this resolution, which I'm sure other provincial governments would support, to tackle the federal government and have the federal government, under the Competition Act, appoint a special investigator to review this annual situation that comes up right in front of weekends in Ontario whereby the gasoline prices go up by enormous amounts so that people are forced to pay a greater amount of money, which is most irritating and seems to have no logic other than for perhaps a profit motive.

I hope that all members of the House will join with us in supporting this resolution. Now I'll now turn the floor over to the member for Hamilton West.

**Mrs Lillian Ross (Hamilton West):** I'm pleased to rise and address the resolution tabled on August 28 by my honourable colleague Minister David Tsubouchi. First I want to thank members of the House for agreeing to debate the important issue of gas pricing today. I'd also like to acknowledge the member for Quinte for his hard work and effort in February of this year, when he brought forward a similar resolution asking the government to take some action. That resolution was unanimously passed in this House at that time.

I'm asking this House for all-party support of this resolution so that Minister Tsubouchi may be able to present the unanimous expression of the Ontario Legislature when he meets with his consumer colleagues at the next consumer ministers' conference in Regina on September 10 and 11.

It has already been established that competition in the gasoline marketplace and gas pricing are the responsibility of the federal government under the Competition Act. We're asking the Honourable John Manley to take action. We are asking the federal minister to exercise his responsibility under the powers of the Competition Act to eliminate anti-competitive pricing in the retail gasoline marketplace across this nation.

Mr Tsubouchi could not have been any clearer last Thursday. This is a problem of national dimensions that can only be solved by amending the Competition Act in

order to address pricing practices within the gasoline industry. Resolving this issue will require a great deal of cooperation from everyone involved, and "cooperation" was the key word during the last consumer ministers' meeting held here in Toronto last year. In his closing remarks following last year's consumer ministers' conference, Secretary of State Martin Cauchon said, "This meeting is an example of how governments can achieve a high degree of consumer protection in the marketplace by working together, sharing information and resources, using the best technologies available to benefit all Canadians."

Ontario needs to present a united front to the oil industry in order to have the required impact and to force that sector to stop abusing Canadian consumers. No other Ontario government has actually taken action on this issue. We don't believe that's good enough. Minister Tsubouchi has written to Canada's gas refiners demanding that steps be taken to resolve this issue. He has met with the Independent Retail Gasoline Marketers Association and other independent gasoline retailers to discuss issues such as retail margins.

I believe the next logical step is to take the opportunity that is before us at the consumer ministers' conference in Regina and see what level of support we will receive from the other provinces and territories. The federal government has so far resisted taking action that would protect consumers in Ontario and across this country against the undesirable market practices being conducted by petroleum companies relating to gasoline pricing. We must persuade the federal government to reconsider its position by putting pressure at the consumer ministers' conference. Failure to do so goes against the spirit of the agreement on internal trade signed by Ottawa and all provinces and territories.

Provincial ministers have already stressed the need to build on the agreement on internal trade and to strengthen the Canadian marketplace for the benefit of consumers and businesses. This government is committed to providing consumers with a fair, competitive marketplace, whether it's at the gas pump or at the front door of their homes. Anti-competitive practices such as those that our resolution asks Ottawa to address do not help anyone. They are bad for business, they are bad for the marketplace and ultimately they are bad for the consumers. In this resolution we are demanding that Ottawa ensure fair pricing in the retail gasoline marketplace and that it appoint a special investigator to review the situation and to make recommendations to ensure Canadian consumers benefit from competitive gasoline pricing.

Previous inquiries on alleged collusion among the large oil companies have failed. Experience has shown us it is not easy to prove any attempt of influencing a competitor to raise or lower his prices. But every consumer who goes out for a drive, particularly on weekends in summer, can see the inexplicable increase in gas prices at the pump. While this is certainly a problem that plagues Ontario consumers on weekends, the trend is clearly national and is quite frankly unacceptable.

Although we all agree that there is a problem, gathering sufficient evidence to take action has so far eluded those who tried. The appointment of a special investigator is therefore paramount to succeeding where others have failed. Only a person with designated powers stands a chance to solve this problem and make the appropriate recommendations to amend the Competition Act. That is why I am seeking today expressions of support from both opposition parties and all members of the House for Minister Tsubouchi's resolution. This will enable Minister Tsubouchi to have the full backing of the Ontario Legislature in presenting Ontario's position to the federal-provincial consumer ministers' meeting in Regina. I certainly look forward and hope that we will gain the support of this House for this action.

1550

**Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke-Rexdale):** I'm quite delighted to join in this resolution presented by the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations and to follow the parliamentary assistant for the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations on gasoline pricing.

In my estimation this is a good resolution in terms of trying to act in concert with the federal government to appoint a special investigator to get at the cause of gasoline pricing. It seems to me that if you have specific information on price trends, on how the prices in the past few weeks have risen to astronomical levels in some parts of Ontario, particularly in Metropolitan Toronto, north-western Ontario and northern Ontario, and even in the mid-eastern parts of Ontario as you get towards Algonquin Park —

**Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt):** Free enterprise.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley):** The member for Nickel Belt, come to order.

**Mr Hastings:** It seems to me that if you have good comprehensive pricing information through a special investigator that the federal government has the authority to appoint through the Combines Act, then I think, in concert, we can get somewhere.

There is often a great deal of political debate as to who is responsible and who didn't act before etc, or did act before, and one of the ways of not going about this is to bring in price regulation, because I would argue that if you are going to have pricing regulation on this commodity, you would have to have pricing information based on every product and service in the marketplace. In our estimation as a government, intervention by price regulation is not the way to go, but to get information and to morally persuade the large oil corporations is certainly a good way to go.

Let me put it on the record that previous governments have used this issue to their own particular purposes at that point in time, but it is noteworthy that in May 1986, when Mr Kwinter was the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations and was asked a question in this House about whether there was any possibility of regulating the price of consumer gas, he said very clearly, and I want to make sure we're quoting him correctly: "Are we going to bring in legislation to roll back the prices? The

answer is no." We have it on the record that that party, while they are perhaps favouring that kind of intrusive regulatory model today, certainly did not do so when they were the government of the day 11 years ago, so for them to stand here and to demand that Ontario introduce pricing regulation on gasoline prices is a non sequitur in our estimation.

Furthermore, I want to point out that if you look at the Liberal red book that they ran on in the last election — I was just going through it — it's quite interesting to note that on practically every issue, whether it's health care, violence against the family or education restructuring, you would think, "Oh, this must be the Common Sense Revolution." The wording is almost the same until you look at the front of the document and it's got a different leader's face and name on it.

It's very interesting. I can't find in this document which they value so highly — they're always trotting out their version of our version of the Common Sense Revolution, and if they want to point it out, it wasn't in the CSR, but we also want to have on the record that this issue, which is a perennial, as the member for Don Mills has mentioned, is absolutely silent in here. There is no position of the Liberal Party, in its campaign of 1995, bringing in this issue. There is no referencing back to the historical record. Let's have that on the record as well.

What are the options? The options are to support this resolution to get the federal government to recognize its federal responsibility —

*Interjections.*

**Mr Hastings:** They're not very good when it comes to acting in concert. They don't want to hear about their federal brethren in Ottawa who play an essential role. They are the government of Canada, so we can't do this on our own. We need their cooperation. We need their assistance in being able to get to the root cause of perennial gasoline price increases for consumers in this province, regardless of where they live.

A lot of people have not experienced much in the way of a benefit, salary or wage increase over the last eight years, except in specific sectors of the economy, so if their standard of living in terms of gross income has been almost stagnant for the last decade, we as a government, in concert with the federal government in Ottawa, can work together to get to the root cause of this situation and to bring some degree of control and dealing with the oil companies in terms of whether there is real price collusion going on under the federal Combines Act. The members opposite may not want to hear about the responsibility of the federal government to deal with that.

**Mr Laughren:** Oh yes, we want to hear it.

**Mr Hastings:** Let's remind the member for Sudbury that in point of fact we can do a great deal about this if all members of this House support this resolution so that the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations, Minister Tsubouchi, can take it to Regina and get the other fellow members of fellow ministries, consumer and commercial or whatever they're called in the respective provinces, to deal with this issue with Ottawa, instead of trying

to create political division around it, and there's great opportunity for that.

I think the remarks that we have placed today, the direction we're prepared to take, is an honest attempt to deal with an issue that affects an awful lot of people, consumers in my riding and in all the other ridings of this province, and it's incumbent on us to work with the federal government. We as a provincial government have very seldom attacked the federal government on issues. We have certainly presented our viewpoints.

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker:** Order, please.

**Mr Hastings:** If there's ever a joke of the day, it's when these folks across the way —

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker:** Member for Essex South, come to order.

**Mr Hastings:** So we want to get very political about it. Let me go back to the red book again. Big, big silence. Unless they can point to the page where it's in here where the member for Essex campaigned on this particular —

**Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South):** Where is it in the CSR?

**The Acting Speaker:** Member for Essex South, come to order.

**Mr Hastings:** I already reiterated that it was not in the CSR. We already pointed that out to you, but you do not like to be reminded that it was not in the red book, member for Essex South, and I'll lay you a dollar to a doughnut that you didn't even campaign on the issue in the 1995 election. If you want to get into the political rhetoric game, I can do that. I'm trying to speak about this in the context of working together with the federal government and dealing with this issue, whereas all you would want to do is price-regulate it, contradictory to what your minister said back in 1986. But that's so traditional of the folks across the way, we know.

I think this is a good motion and it's a way to deal with the issue.

**Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton North):** I am here today to address the issue as part of this motion about the reintroduction of the vehicle registration fees in northern Ontario. The issue is really about investment in the northern economy and fairness to taxpayers. No one, not even the opposition, will dispute that improving highways is critical to the continued development of the northern economy. As a guy who grew up in Sault Ste Marie and lived there till I was in my mid-20s, I fully appreciate the value, the need and the necessity of good highways in northern Ontario and the ability to get around. This government demonstrated its commitment to the north by increasing spending on highways last year by \$40 million.

1600

**Mr Frank Miclash (Kenora):** On a point of order, Madam Speaker: I don't believe we have a quorum in the House on this most important issue that we're discussing here this afternoon.

**The Acting Speaker:** Clerk, could you check to see if there's a quorum.

**Clerk Assistant (Ms Deborah Deller):** A quorum is not present, Speaker.

*The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.*

**Clerk Assistant:** A quorum is now present, Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** The member for Brampton North.

**Mr Spina:** This government demonstrated its commitment to the north by increasing spending on highways last year by \$40 million, an increase we will maintain over the next five years. In fact, it's an unprecedented \$200-million increase in highway spending over three years. No previous government has ever committed such a large amount of funding to improve northern highways. We've done so with the respect for the taxpayer that is the hallmark of this government.

I'd like to point out that every single dollar raised from the licence fees in northern Ontario goes towards highway spending. The current fee revenues in the north account for only \$20 million of the \$40-million annual increase we've budgeted for highway improvements throughout the north. Taxpayers in northern Ontario need only examine the past practices of former governments to determine whether they're getting value for their tax dollar.

The third party, I grant you, eliminated the vehicle registration in 1991. Cost to the province? About \$20 million in revenue. How did the NDP pay for it? Simple. They merely slashed \$20 million from the northern highway budget. They gave northern drivers a break with one hand and they picked their pockets with the other. The budget, when they took office in 1990, was about \$108 million. In 1991 it was increased, to their credit, to \$136 million. But in 1992, after the fee was dropped, the expenditures dropped to \$115 million.

Once again, we have both the Liberals and the NDP promising to eliminate the fee. How would they pay for it? They would once again play a shell game with taxpayers' money and slash highway spending throughout northern Ontario.

This government will not insult the intelligence of northerners by indulging in a fiscal sleight of hand. We will not sacrifice northern highways and risk the future of northern Ontario's economy. Where the Liberals and NDP showed little concern for northern highways and the people who travel on them, this government has shown the courage to change things.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Spina:** This is interesting. The member from one of the northern Ontario ridings, Mr Micalash, Liberal MPP for Kenora, said, "The residents of northern Ontario shouldn't have to pay the annual licence fee just because we have to pay more for gas." But the irony of that statement is this: Gasoline taxes in this province are the only flat tax in the entire system. It doesn't matter whether it's 75 cents a litre in northern Ontario and 50 cents or 55 cents or 60 cents a litre in southern Ontario; the same amount of taxes are being paid. The difference is the amount of revenue that's generated by the oil companies.

The difference here is that there is not a free enterprise system for the oil companies in this country. The oligopoly

that has been created must be broken up. That is the reason there are excessive gas prices. It can only be broken up in this country by collusion, if you want to use that word in a positive sense, between the provincial ministers, despite what the people in Ottawa choose or choose not to do. That is what we must do. We will invest our \$200 million needed to fix the highways in northern Ontario, deteriorating after 10 years of Liberal and NDP neglect. The vehicle registration fee is small price for a large investment in real growth.

I therefore support the minister and wish every success in achieving the objectives of this resolution.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin):** Further debate?

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** Mr Speaker, I'll be sharing my time with Mr Crozier, Mr Phillips, Mr Bartolucci, Mr Kwinter, Mr Micalash and Mr Ramsay in our initial hour we have on this.

I want to say first of all that this is a most amusing afternoon in one way and an encouraging afternoon in another way. It's amusing in that there isn't anybody in the province who for one minute believes that this government had anything it was going to do about gas pricing until such time as it hit the skids in the polls. Then all of a sudden they became interested.

I've directed several questions to ministers. Some of the government members themselves know and — I'm going to give them the credit — in the back rooms of the caucus would surely be speaking to the government ministers appropriately and saying, "It's time this government, the provincial government, did something about gas prices."

But you see, Mike Harris and his colleagues are large as life when there's credit to be had for something. They're there to take credit for anything good that happens. But when there's responsibility, and responsibility that's clearly within the jurisdiction of the provincial government, they take a hike. The Premier takes a hike. I read a statement today that, if I could find it, I would read again because it so expressed the views of the people of Ontario about gas pricing.

I directed a question to Bill Saunderson, who is the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism. I have asked him a number of questions about this. All he has done over this period of time is defend the oil industry, apologize for the oil barons in this province. I was shocked and appalled but not necessarily surprised, because I know that you people on that side believe you should never interfere in what you call the free market, even if this isn't a free market.

When my friend Norm Sterling was Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations — Norm needs a third hand because he's pointing in all different directions at somebody else whenever there's blame to be assigned — I asked him, "Have you called in these people and told them what you think of the gas prices?" He kind of mumbled, "Yes." But when he got out in the hallway he couldn't be pinned down on it.

In a supplementary question I asked him, "Are you going to apologize the way your Republican friends in the US do by saying, "'It's not the big companies doing this; it's the gas taxes'?" My good friend Norm Sterling said, "Yes, of course it's the gas taxes." The Premier didn't agree with that this week. Norm must be on the outs with the Premier again over that.

Question after question is directed; it goes to the minister; they bounce it over to the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations, and all he does — he had Jan Dymond, a consultant hired at \$2,600 a day, to advise him on how to answer questions in the House after the day he said people should buy tuna at a certain price, that they could all buy tuna.

What they did is that they filled his briefing book with old, stale quotes from the past and history and pointing at somebody else. I said, "Why don't you do something else?" My good friend the member for Quinte, who knows the issue better than anybody in this House in my view — I won't ask him to rise in the House; he's a member of the government caucus, and that wouldn't be fair — in his heart of hearts I'm sure would like to see his own government, the government he was elected to be part of, take action to stop predatory pricing practices by the major oil companies. I would agree with him if he said that. In fact, he brought a resolution forward. I would have liked to see a bill at that time that would have had the provincial government end the practice of predatory pricing, but he wasn't allowed to do that. I admire him because he knows the situation and the circumstances well.

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I was reading some of the answers that I've had over the years to these questions, particularly from the present administration. I have right here with me now some of those responses. Even way back in February, I asked certain questions of ministers concerning this matter.

I asked the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism, the Honourable Bill Saunderson, who has now been silenced by the government, about this. I said: "You have within your jurisdiction provincially, without looking at the feds or the local government or anybody else, jurisdiction to end predatory pricing. Will you give an undertaking to the House today that your government will introduce provincial legislation to define predatory pricing as an offence outside of the federal Competition Act; that is, not allow the major oil companies to undercut the independents, put them out of business and remove all competition?"

Here's what he said. I thought the member for Quinte was going to fall off his chair when the minister gave this answer; he was probably certainly worried about it. This is Bill Saunderson speaking on behalf of the government, on behalf of Mike Harris, on behalf of the cabinet, on behalf of the Tory caucus. He said the following: "If you travel across Canada, I think our prices that I see at the pumps these days are quite fair." Can you imagine that, someone on behalf of this government saying the prices are quite fair? Then he said: "When one travels outside Canada, our prices here are also comparable — and I say

that again, 'comparable' — to what I see going on in the world. There are certain areas that are closer to gas and oil production facilities and therefore pay a lesser price, but I think under our circumstances our prices are quite fair."

This is rather interesting. Let me tell you, as my friend from Nickel Belt will know, having served in this House many years, that's the real position of this government. They really think the prices are fair, and all along they've been saying this.

But a poll came out and then another poll came out and another poll came out. Polls between elections, let me tell you, don't mean much, but here the polls came out and the government had taken a dive. "What can I do to sound like a populist? I know I sit at the tables with the corporate captains, I know I'm a friend of the oil barons, but I've got to say something. The oil barons will know I really don't mean it if I say it," thinks Mike Harris in his mind. So he blurts something out about the prices being unfair, even after his Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations of days gone by, now the Minister of Energy, said, "Oh, it's the taxes."

Remember Newt Gingrich, the Republican House leader in the United States House of Representatives, the Speaker of the House? Newt and the boys from the Republican Party said, "Oh, it's not the oil companies, it's the taxes." He wanted to apologize. He didn't want the oil companies to take the hit. All we've had from this government for the last several months is apologizing for the oil companies. I can't believe you would continue to apologize for them.

Then right out of the blue comes the Premier. With the by-elections coming up and being down in the polls, the Premier decides to do a complete reversal, at least publicly.

**Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie):** Absolutely.

**Mr Bradley:** The member for Sault Ste Marie isn't fooled by that. He knows the Premier is simply putting on a show, because if you want to —

**Mr Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge):** Just like you are.

**Mr Douglas B. Ford (Etobicoke-Humber):** Don't mind him. He's an old gas man.

**Mr Bradley:** There are interjections from the Conservative benches there. I must be hitting some soft spots over there at least.

**Mr Hastings:** Are you going to vote for it?

**Mr Bradley:** The member from Rexdale says, "Are you going to vote for it?" You don't think we're stupid enough politically to vote against it, do you? This is a trick resolution that points somewhere else. If you vote against the resolution, they say, "Well, you don't want to do anything about gas prices." And you know something? The smart boys in the back room in the Premier's office are saying: "We've got a good idea. Why don't we frame a resolution that all the parties will have to be able to vote for, because if they don't, we can say, 'Ah, you see, they're really for high gas prices.'" We won't be fooled

by that. If you think you can fool the opposition with that, you can't. It's meaningless.

What is not meaningless is the fact that you can take action in this province. There are several jurisdictions in the United States and several provincial jurisdictions in Canada that have taken action. The province of Quebec has a predatory gas pricing law. The member from Rexdale should know that. That law was brought in because what was happening was that his friends the oil barons were charging to their own people, their own retailers, a certain price, and to the independent retailers they were charging a higher wholesale price.

**Mr E.J. Douglas Rollins (Quinte):** They are today.

**Mr Bradley:** "They are today," says the member for Quinte, and he's absolutely right. What does that do? That means the independent has to take much less of a profit or lose money. I've had people who own independent stations. I should say, by the way, it's not even the retailers who are supplied by the major oil companies, let's say Shell or Esso or one of the major oil companies, and they use names like Beaver and other names they have for these companies. It's not the retailers' fault. They're the victims. The retailers have to meet their commitments. When a big oil company comes in and says to them, "We're going to charge you this new high wholesale price," they can't absorb that so they've got to put their price up.

It's worse for the independents, because what they'll do is sell to their own people at one price, and to the independent operators, the only people who provide true competition, because they're not under the thumb of the oil companies, they charge a higher price. I had one in my own community. A person came in and showed me the figures. She said, "How can we compete when down the street the price of gas retail from the big oil company is less than what they're charging us wholesale for the new load of gas?"

The member for Quinte, as I say, knows better than anybody else. I want to say, if anybody in this province wants to know anything about this, he knows 10 times as much as I will ever know about the pricing of gasoline because he's been in the business. I want to give him his credit. He knows it inside out. I appreciate the fact that the whiz kids have said, "Oh, we can't let the member for Quinte get up and speak because he knows too much about it."

It reminds me of Mr Smith, the member for Middlesex, when we were talking about the issue of planning. He was a professional planner. I was trying to get him in a committee to give some opinions on it, because he has some expertise, more expertise than most of us in the committee.

**Mr Hastings:** Oh, you think he is politically stupid?

**Mr Bradley:** He had been silenced, I say to my friend from Rexdale, by the bosses on that side. It's unfortunate when that happens. They silence the very people who know the most. My friend from Chatham-Kent knows that's the case.

When I want to know where this government stands, I simply look at the answers I got before. I've read one. Let

me give you Mr Saunderson's answer again, February 20. He went on to say the following on behalf of Mike Harris — Macho Mike, as I call him now. On behalf of the whole cabinet, on behalf of the whole Tory caucus, here's what my friend Bill Saunderson said:

"But let me just tell you over there," meaning on this side of the House, "that we on this side of the House believe in the free enterprise system. We don't intend to dictate to companies what they should and should not do, provided they act within reason. I have no intention of interfering with the free enterprise system, the pricing system. If we were to do that we would be a laughing-stock, sir. It would be a big mistake for this province. We would not attract business to this province.

"What we have now is a system that encourages businesses.... We're open for business."

So what does he say? He said the government would be crazy to do this, would be foolish to do this, and I believed him then. I didn't agree with him, but I said, "Well, at least Bill's speaking on behalf of the right-wingers in that government" — and that's virtually everybody — "on behalf of the Premier." That's the answer he gave.

Then all of a sudden there's a conversion on the road to Damascus. The Premier is converted. He reads the polls and he's converted. He takes up the — what kind of standard would it be? He took up the gas gouging standard and said, "I'm going to stand up for the people of this province," and everybody laughed in the province because they know that he is the friend of the corporate captains of the oil industry. He is not going to stand up.

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What is Mike's solution? He says: "I'm going to get tough. I'm going to say, 'The feds should do something.'" Even though he has it within his own jurisdiction, even though it's within his own backyard to be able to pass a law in this province prohibiting predatory pricing — it's within the jurisdiction — he won't do it. He wants to point somewhere else: Let somebody else do it. Let somebody else take the flak for it from the corporate captains.

Then I thought, if he's not prepared to do that, surely he will call the oil barons into his office and say, face to face, "I am dissatisfied with this." But no, he doesn't want to do that because that would be offensive to the people who are his friends, so he doesn't do that.

Then I thought maybe he'll set up some kind of provincial inquiry, because we have a Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations — at least a ministry; there's part of it left. We have a Minister of Energy, who was kicking around a couple of weeks ago but is not kicking around this week. Either one of those people could set up this special investigation. But what does he say? He says, "No, no, let the federal government do that." "I'm going to get my big brother after you," says Mike Harris — big, tough Mike. But I'll tell you something, if there were credit to be gotten, he'd be front row centre, elbowing everybody else out of the way to take credit.

When you make those pronouncements, when you go before the television cameras, when you put on the big show, when you get the headline, then surely you should

be able to back it up with action in your own jurisdiction. That's what they're not doing and that's what this government's afraid to do. They're happy to point a finger somewhere else. They know we'll get unanimous consent to that in this Legislature, no problem, because, of course, we're not foolish enough to fall into your trap.

But we know where the real responsibility lies and the people of this province are going to be demanding that their government take action, not that they pass the buck, not that they point the finger somewhere else, not that they continue to apologize for the oil giants, the oil barons, the corporate captains of the oil industry; but instead that they stand up for independent operators in this province, for retailers in this province and, most of all, for the consumers of this province who see gasoline as a needed product.

This is something you can't do without, particularly people in rural and more remote areas. They need this. This is essential. That is why I am calling upon this government, within its own jurisdiction, to take action and to quit passing the buck to somebody else.

**Mr Crozier:** It's a pleasure for me today to have an opportunity to speak to this resolution. At the outset, I'd just like to read from the resolution and refer those who may be watching to what is contained in it. One of the "whereases" is "gasoline pricing is an issue of common interest to all provincial governments and Canadian consumers." I don't think anybody would dispute that. I also think that it is equally a concern to all governments in the great Dominion of Canada.

I'd like to refer to a letter, and there has been some debate already as to what authority federal and provincial governments have. What I'd like to lay out today are what some of our options are. I think what the people of Ontario want, and I know certainly what the people of Essex South want, is action. If that's cooperation between all the provincial governments and the federal government, then that's exactly what they want. If it's the federal government acting on its own, they'd like that. If it's the provincial government that can act on its own, they'd like that. But what they'd like is something done.

We've been at it since last February, as the member for St Catharines has pointed out, in asking about gas prices. More recently, over the past week or so, we asked about gas prices. When the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism gave his answer, it would appear as though everything was okay, there was no point in moving ahead. I think even the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations to some extent voiced that opinion, that things are as they should be and there's nothing much that we're going to do.

But then, as the member for St Catharines said, suddenly, within the last few days, the Premier has decided, notwithstanding what his minister said, there is something we should do. Harris said in a scrum this morning, "We have to find out whether regulation of prices have led to lower prices across Canada." He said we have to look to see if regulation of prices has led to lower prices across Canada.

Obviously the Premier himself is considering regulation as one of the options. He said he wants to see an active, competitive market, pointing to how beer companies are competing to consumers' benefit for lower prices. Beer prices have to have the approval of the provincial government. He has clearly given an example and said that he's thinking about regulation.

All I want to do today is to point out some of the options that are available. When it comes to the federal government, I think we should attempt to clarify where their authority is, and, as I said at the outset, if they can do something within their authority, then I think we would all want them to do that.

In a letter dated August 22, written by John Bean, who is the assistant deputy director of investigation and research, division B, criminal matters, in Industry Canada, to Mike Haines, the assistant to a federal MP:

"Further to your telephone conversation of August 22 with Mr Chandler concerning gasoline pricing and specifically the question of regulation of gasoline prices by the federal government, it is our information that this would fall outside the scope of federal legislative power.

"The regulation of a particular industry operating in a province is normally a matter of 'property and civil rights,' a subject that is within the exclusive provincial jurisdiction, pursuant to subsection 92(13) of the Constitution Act, 1867. Jurisprudence has determined that this is the case even if aspects of the industry may extend beyond the boundaries of the province," in other words, nationwide. "The regulation of a specific industry, for example, to control the prices of a commodity, is not within the federal 'trade and commerce power' under subsection 91(2) of the Act. The Supreme Court has limited the scope of the trade and commerce power to circumstances that affect trade as a whole rather than a particular industry.

"The regulation of gasoline prices would not fall under any of the specific federal powers such as banking or pipelines. The federal government can set gasoline prices using powers set out in the Energy Supplies Emergency Act, RSC 1985, but only in national emergency circumstances. The constitutional basis for this legislation falls under the federal power to legislate for the peace, order and good government of Canada."

So we have an indication, at least in the opinion of one, where the clear jurisdiction of the federal government lies. Much has been said about the federal act on competition, and I want to refer you to an example of how the federal government can and has acted very recently under the federal Competition Act. This is Ottawa, March 18, 1997:

"Investigations by the competition bureau into practices of several major gasoline companies have produced no evidence to support allegations of price fixing, anti-competitive behaviour and misleading advertising."

A second allegation was made that Ultramar of Canada's — incorporated as Value Plus — marketing campaign was predatory pricing. That was not found to be the case.

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"A third allegation addressed the issue of abuse of dominant position as related to Ultramar and other regional and national petroleum companies. The investigation found no evidence to support the allegations that the companies were squeezing the margins available to independent petroleum marketers with the intent of forcing the independents out of business," which is predatory pricing. "In fact, the margin between crude and retail prices has been shrinking for all firms over the past decade. The evidence indicated that declining margins being earned by large and small Canadian petroleum companies are the result of competition and the restructuring of the industry."

I give quotes from this gasoline inquiries report to indicate that, yes, the federal government has the power and when called upon should use that power to investigate the gasoline prices, as they are a concern — any fraudulent attempt by the gasoline and the oil companies to regulate and have non-competitive gasoline prices.

Let me give you an example of the comparison of prices from July 4 through about August 25. This is an example where regulation by a province can affect gasoline prices at the pump. On July 4, 1997, in Toronto the price of a litre of gasoline was 51.9 cents. In Charlottetown, PEI, where they do have regulatory prices, it was 59 cents. The next week, July 11, in Toronto it was 55.3 cents, up 3.4. Charlottetown stayed at 59. On July 18 in Toronto, the price was 53.9, down 1.4 cents. The price in Charlottetown was 59 cents. On July 25, in Toronto the price of a litre of gasoline was 55.4 cents, up a cent and a half a litre. In Charlottetown it remained at 59 cents.

My point is that there are other options which seem to be working in other provinces, and I suspect the minister will hear that when he goes to his meeting in the next week or so.

A couple more comparisons: On August 8, 1997, in Toronto the retail price of a litre was 58.1 cents, up 5.2 cents from the week before. Charlottetown remained the same as it had been for over a month, at 59 cents. On August 15, Toronto was at 60.8, up another 2.7 cents, and Charlottetown stayed the same, at 59 cents.

There are other options. There are options that can be taken immediately. They don't have to wait for further investigation. Let's say it is possible that further investigation would find that there is no collusion. I am not going to draw any conclusion, because we simply don't know, but it's something that we, from time to time, should certainly find out. But gasoline tax was mentioned earlier. I want to point out that the Taxfighter, Mike Harris, has a bit of a history when it comes to gasoline tax. In the 1981 budget, when Mike Harris was a member of the government of the day, lo and behold, he voted for a gasoline per-litre price increase of one cent and a diesel price increase of 1.1 cent per litre that amounted to a revenue of over \$135 million that year. I'm not going to call that a tax grab. Some people would call that a \$135-million tax grab on fuel prices that Mike Harris was part of.

If we look at taxes, we can make a comparison across Canada. The statistics are accumulated by the government

of Canada, but this brochure is put out by the Petroleum Communication Foundation in Calgary, Alberta. Just to give you a very short comparison, although it compares all the provinces and the Northwest Territories, the province of Ontario, when it comes to the tax that the provincial government puts on a litre of gasoline, is the fourth-highest in the Dominion of Canada. The fourth-highest is what the provincial government taxes a litre of gasoline. When you look at the federal tax on that same litre of gasoline, it is the second-lowest in the Dominion of Canada.

Those in the retail part of the petroleum industry, as recently as last weekend, said to the province of Ontario: "If you want to affect gasoline prices immediately, reduce the tax. You're the fourth-highest in the country." We like to say from time to time that we're either average or below average when it comes to taxes, but with these taxes we're the fourth-highest. Federal taxes are the fourth-lowest.

There are some options open to this government. We all want lower gasoline prices, without question, so what we should do is look at these options and take the best course that will get us there the quickest and in the fairest way. I think the people of Ontario, particularly the people of Essex South, will appreciate that. Perhaps the government might even consider rewording this resolution so that it asks for cooperation rather than condemnation of anyone.

**Mr Monte Kwinter (Wilson Heights):** I am pleased to join in this debate. As in the old cliché, it's déjà vu all over again. The member for Etobicoke-Rexdale referred to a response I made in the House in 1986. What he didn't say is what went on during that exchange between myself, as the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations, and my critic, who is now the Solicitor General of Ontario, who was the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations in a previous government.

In my response to him I read back to him his response. Then he asked me another question and I read back the response of his predecessor. Then when he asked the third question I read back the response of his predecessor's predecessor.

So what we have is an issue that keeps going around and coming around without resolution. One of the problems we have — and it really is almost comical to see the flip-flop this particular government has taken, with the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism taking a classic small-c conservative stand, that "The free market should work, and why should we be regulating one particular segment and not another?" and then the Premier coming out and saying that consumers are being gouged, that there's collusion. Even the wording of this resolution, in its second line, refers to the situation where the prices are unreasonably high.

Who is determining that this is unreasonably high? It's unreasonably high in comparison to what it was the week before or two weeks before, but there isn't anyone, I say to my friend from Quinte, who really knows what the right price of gasoline should be. All they know is that last week it was 57 something and now it's 62 and that is

unreasonable. It may not be unreasonable. It may be eminently reasonable, but that is not the issue.

The issue we have is that we are an automobile-driven economy. It is not practical, as some columnists have been saying — “If you want to get the price of gasoline down, walk, take public transit.” That is not going to work.

We have to decide as a government, do we see this in the same way as we see health care and education, that transportation with the automobile is so critical to the wellbeing of the economic state of this jurisdiction that we are going to intervene in the pricing?

That's a decision that you as a government have to make. I can tell you, that has far-reaching implications if you do it. Then you decide, maybe the price of milk should be regulated, and then maybe the price of bread should be regulated, and then maybe the price of something else should be regulated. You really have a philosophical problem.

I was listening to the member for Brampton North. He said, “We've got to break up this oligopoly.” In economic terms, that's silly. You don't break up oligopolies; you break up monopolies. Oligopolies mean that there are few people in the particular sector, and the reason is that there are barriers to entry. It costs one pile of money to finance a refinery. The petroleum industry is not regulated in the sense of its marketing. It may be regulated in the sense of environmental controls, things of that kind, but it's a free market. Anybody who has the money, who has an inclination to think they can get the right return on their investment, can be in the petroleum business.

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The only time we can see historically was when Standard Oil was controlled by the Rockefellers. They had a monopoly. The government decided that was not in the best interests of consumers and they broke it up. Now you've got Standard Oil and all these other companies that are offshoots of the original Rockefeller petroleum industry.

We have a situation where — this is political, all the posturing whereby whatever government happens to be in power gets up and says something because they feel it's required. I had a call today from one of my constituents, asking me what I was going to do about gas prices. He said: “I'm going to get after the government. I'm really going to go after them and tell them they've got to do something.” But in reality, what can you do?

The one thing you can do is what my colleague from St Catharines talks about. There's nobody who can tell me what the price of gasoline should be, in the same situation with insurance. Nobody can tell me what it costs to insure a car. All I know is that last year my insurance bill was \$600 and this year it's \$900 or \$1,000, and that's ridiculous, but that \$600 may have been the best bargain you ever got in your life. It doesn't matter. All I know is this is what I paid then and this is what I'm paying now. There's something wrong with that.

If we take the recommendation of the member for St Catharines, we can say, “Let the marketplace work, but because it is an oligopoly and there are only a very few

players, let's make sure that they treat the independents fairly and that predatory pricing is outlawed.”

Let's talk about the pricing of gasoline. In the Toronto market, which is one of the most competitive gasoline markets in the world, one of the major problems we have is that independents can go over to the United States and buy gasoline on what they call the spot market. They go over and they buy a tanker of gasoline, drive it over the border, all legitimate, everything aboveboard, and decide they're going to sell it at X and make money, because they've bought it at the right price.

Gasoline is one of the most price-sensitive commodities we have. It is so strange that someone will drive by and see 57.1 and remember that a mile and a half back it was 56.8, and they'll turn around, drive back to pay the 56.8 and spend far more money getting back there than they're possibly going to save by doing it. But that's the nature of the business.

When people say, “How come all the prices go up at the same time?” — what happens is someone decides, “This is the price,” and if it's less than what the competition is charging, they have to meet it. How could you possibly have a gas station on one side of the street selling at 56.7 and the other one selling at 58.9? Who's going to buy it? Nobody. They're going to see the two signs and they're going to go to where the price is. That is why the prices are always the same. Everybody plays chicken as to how high or how low they think they can get away with, and everybody follows suit.

We really have a situation where you have to make a basic, fundamental decision: Are we going to intervene in the marketplace? I'm not saying there isn't a case to be made for that, if it's decided, as I say, in the same way that health care, education, all these things the government has to subsidize because the individual couldn't possibly afford to pay for the whole thing by themselves, so we collectively have to make sure it's available.

If you make that decision, then you're really on the slippery slope where you say: “Why are we stopping with gasoline? Why aren't we into a whole range of other commodities?” Again, I would find it very strange for this government in particular to go on that path, because it is absolutely contrary to everything this government has indicated it stands for.

How do we deal with it? We deal with it by raising it as a public issue. You have to understand, from their perspective the oil companies are trying to get a return on their investment, and if they don't get it they will either leave the market — and lots of them have gone. Do you see any more Texaco signs around Ontario or in Canada? No. They're out of the business, and the reason they sold out is because they felt that part of the market was far too competitive.

You have to understand, there's upstream and there's downstream. That's another problem: How do you evaluate what the price should be? Because they can control whether they apportion profits upstream, which is at the stock side, where the crude oil comes in, or downstream, after it has been refined.

There's another issue. I think the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale was trying to recommend that the minister, when he goes to the ministers' conference, have a universal pricing system across Canada. That's not going to work either, because you should know, and I'm sure most of you do know, that all the gasoline that comes into eastern Ontario comes from the Middle East and all the gasoline that comes through western Canada comes from Alberta. The reason for that is it just costs too much money, interestingly enough, to transport the crude oil from Alberta to the east. They can buy it cheaper by bringing it in by tanker from the Middle East. When you have two different markets and two different suppliers, it is very difficult to try to even it out.

That gets us back to this basic decision: Are we going to intervene in what is a private business? If you make that decision, you take the responsibility of doing it. I'm not saying you don't do it, but it would seem to me that the key thing we should be doing is seeing where the province can really intervene to minimize the impact on what is really an essential commodity. It's absolutely essential. I can't fathom a situation, if there was no gasoline, how this economy would work. It wouldn't work. Our trucks wouldn't run; our people couldn't get to work because public transit is only available in certain parts of the province in an effective and necessary way.

What you can do, I suggest, and I keep repeating, is make sure you minimize the problems, and one of those is to make sure the market really does work. You have to understand, the independents do not refine it and, as a result, they have a lot less flexibility. The major oil producers can decide arbitrarily, "Let's shift our profit upstream, and we'll meet any competition and we'll match any price."

I think you saw reported in the media, or someone talked about it in the House, where an independent came in, had bought on the spot market in Buffalo, brought his tanker in, undercut the majors by a significant amount of money and the station owner called his supervisor and said, "The guy across the street is selling at," whatever it was, "four or five cents below my market price." They said: "Fine. Reduce it to one cent a litre." What do they care? They'll lose on that one station for a few days and they drive the guy out of business.

Again, if you drive up to a station and one guy's selling it for a cent a litre and the other one's got it at 53 cents a litre, where are you going to buy it? They have that ability to decide where they're going to have their marketing thrust and where they're not.

Before I finish, I just want to talk about the north. The north has its own unique problem. The problem is that it is not as competitive as it is in, say, the Metro area, because it doesn't pay someone to go over, buy gasoline on the spot market and haul it up to the north. It's far too expensive. So because there isn't the competition, they charge a price they can get away with. That's how the market works. In the Metro areas they can't charge that, because there is competition and because of the price sensitivity of gasoline. The price is really market-driven and there are

people who are market-makers; they determine what the price is, and all the majors have to do is decide whether they want to go with it or not, and invariably they will. They have no choice.

That is the situation. As I say, I find it very interesting that almost on a regular basis this debate takes place and each government takes a position. I just find it strange that this particular government has taken two positions, one diametrically opposed to the other. I suggest that if you're going to direct your efforts you direct them in support of my colleague from St Catharines, who has recommended that we come up with some kind of legislation to prevent predatory pricing so that at least, if we're going to do something, we give our independents a fair shake.

1650

**Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury):** I am pleased to be able to offer a few comments in the five minutes I have to discuss this. The way I'd like to discuss it today, rather than as being in opposition or in government, the first, second or third party, is that I'd like to speak to you the way I believe our constituents think. Our constituents, from any riding in Ontario, are tired of people passing the buck. They're tired of the provincial government putting the onus on the federal government. They're tired of the government saying it was the Liberals' fault or it was the New Democratic Party's fault. They're tired of the New Democratic Party saying it's the federal Liberals' fault.

What they want is people to come together and give some concrete ideas. What I did with a constituent is that I sat him down and talked to him for a few minutes about what we've tried to offer this government by way of ideas or solutions to the problem, something they can do at a provincial level. Obviously, the resolution is going to be supported, there's absolutely no question of that, but it's a resolution with fluff but not very much body.

It would have been much better if this resolution had been passed very early on and then the government did something concrete, as was suggested by the former member for Ottawa East when he introduced his private member's bill, Bill 10, An Act respecting the Price of Motor Vehicle Fuel. This was introduced October 17, 1995, but because he wasn't a member of the government, his private member's bill isn't going anywhere. This has 15 excellent ideas that the government could have used. Any one or a combination of these 15 ideas would have helped solve the dilemma we have today.

Then the member for St Catharines introduced the idea of predatory gas pricing legislation, a very positive idea, so that the independents could survive, so that there would be some form of competition in Ontario, which naturally would help the consumers of Ontario.

Then I wrote to and discussed with the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations the idea that a commission should be set up, a commission to investigate when prices rise to see if it's acceptable and justifiable, so that the consumer in Ontario would be protected. Again, nothing has happened with regard to that recommendation.

Just last week, the member for Kenora — I know he will be addressing this — discussed the idea of a consum-

ers' advocate so that the consumer could be protected. Again, we see no concrete action from the government. What we do see is a resolution, a resolution that will do nothing for the problems consumers in Ontario experience with price at the gas pumps, whether it be in Windsor or as far north as you want to go. But you find, when you start in Windsor and go north, that the price continues to escalate as you go.

I want to take exception to one thing the member for Brampton North, the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines, said when he said there is no difference whether a person pays 75 cents or 54 cents a litre because it's a flat tax. Let me tell you, there is a big difference in northern Ontario in whether we have to pay 75 cents or 54 cents. That's why we have launched the "Northern Ontario New Tax: Yours to Discover" postcard campaign. The one break we had this government is imposing back upon us, and we want to get rid of it, that is, the \$37 to get our vehicles re-registered. We believe that's wrong. We believe that's a tax grab. We believe that's contrary to what Mike Harris said back in 1987 when he said, "Any northern member who comes down here and does not fight for his people does not deserve to be re-elected and does not deserve to come back in this Legislature and may be in for a big surprise when the time comes." Mike Harris, listen to your own words.

**Mr Miclash:** I am pleased to have the opportunity to partake in debate of the government's resolution this afternoon, but I have to tell you one thing. It's not that my constituents are pleased, because they certainly are not. The Harris government's decision to impose a \$37 vehicle tax on northerners is not something that is standing well with the people of northern Ontario.

I have to say that in my part of the province people are used to it. It's not just a weekend fad, where prices go up before the long weekend. People in my part of the province are used to paying over 60 cents a litre. For people who have to depend on their vehicles for transportation, who don't have the public transportation afforded to the folks here in southern Ontario, we feel that's asking just a little too much, along with Mike Harris reimposing the \$37 vehicle tax on northerners. I'm happy to be able to speak to this resolution today, but the people in southern Ontario must realize that we live with that reality to begin with.

We have heard all the promises in the past. I must go back to one promise that I thought was unique, one that I know my constituents really thought was a unique promise, and that was the promise to equalize gas prices across the province. Of course, that was in the 1990 election campaign material of a person who became the Minister of Northern Development, Shelley Martel. Shelley had the idea that we were going to equalize those gas prices across all of Ontario. I read from the Dryden Observer:

"During the 1990 provincial election campaign, many New Democratic Party candidates ran on the promise that the NDP government would equalize gasoline prices across Ontario if elected into office.... Four years later,

with a strong NDP majority in Queen's Park, the government still has not directly dealt with the issue of high gas prices in northern and northwestern Ontario."

I think my constituents would have been happy with equalizing gas prices across Ontario, a promise that later was broken — a lot of frustration in terms of an issue of long standing in this House.

I received a letter at one time from a summer student, a student employed as a gas attendant in Dryden who then continued to university after the summer. He says:

"The most frustrating part of the job was having people ream me out constantly for the high price of gas in the Dryden area, as though I set the gas prices.... I asked the trucker that brings our gas why gas was so much cheaper as soon as one gets across the border to Falcon Lake." That is of course in Manitoba. "Even in Kenora, it can be three cents cheaper per litre, up to 10 cents less in Manitoba.

"He said it was not transportation costs, because he hauls to places in Saskatchewan and Manitoba that are farther away than Dryden, and their price of gas is still cheaper than ours. He also said that dealers in Ontario buy their gas at higher costs than retail rates in Manitoba, according to the price list he had."

Based on that letter, I came into the House just the other day and had a question for the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations. I asked him why Newfoundland can have a consumer advocate, a consumer advocate who would take a look at what this constituent has brought forward, a consumer advocate who would take a look at why constituents of mine in Sandy Lake are paying \$1.29 a litre compared to somewhere around 60 cents a litre here in southern Ontario.

I told the minister that he had an example in Newfoundland where this was being done. His answer was no, that it was not possible that we would want to have somebody go out there and act on behalf of the consumer as an advocate to find out what the true reasoning was. As I said earlier, northerners are truly fed up with not only this government, but other governments, blaming other people, not taking on the responsibility for what they have.

At this time I would like to move an amendment to the resolution by adding the following:

"That in addition to the other provisions of this resolution, the Ontario government implement provisions which would limit the opportunity for predatory pricing, limit the damage that could be inflicted by discriminatory pricing practices and restrain the ability of refiner/marketers to create arbitrary price zones."

1700

**The Deputy Speaker:** The member for Kenora moves that the resolution be amended by adding the following: "That in addition to the other provisions of this resolution, the Ontario government implement provisions which would limit the opportunity for predatory pricing, limit the damage that could be inflicted by discriminatory pricing practices and restrain the ability of refiner/marketers to create arbitrary price zones."

**Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming):** I'm very happy to be able to take my place in this House and talk to this resolution and now to the amendment of this resolution.

Having been a northern member representing the riding of Timiskaming for over 12 years now, this has been a perennial issue with northerners and it's sort of sad that it only gets the full attention of the Legislature when finally southern Ontario gets hit from time to time, as they do, with high gas prices, and then it becomes the issue right across the province.

As my colleague from Kenora said, we suffer from this all the time on a day-to-day basis, all year round, all four seasons and it's not a seasonal hit as it is here in southern Ontario. With the great distances we have to travel to work and to see family in northern Ontario, it's a doubly hard burden for northerners to take.

I think that moving this amendment is the right thing to do here today because what this does is maybe combine what the Ontario government's idea is of going after the feds to take care of this with this amendment that says, "Well, maybe we can do something here also in Ontario." Maybe the combination of this thing is the right thing to do, that maybe we should sit down from a provincial perspective with the federal government and once and for all work this out and come up with a national system that would, if not totally regulate, at least supervise and keep constant vigil on the fluctuation of gas prices in this country, because it's very important for all provinces and all regions of this country and all regions of this province that in order to be productive citizens, in order for our businesses to be profitable, we ensure a basic energy cost for transportation. It's, very important.

Maybe this is the way to do this, with this amendment and the resolution. I think you're going to find you're going to have all-party support. I would hope the government party, the Harris government, would take a very close look at this amendment, that they would consider adding it to their resolution, and look upon it as a friendly amendment so that both of us here in the Legislature of Ontario and in the House of Commons can work on this issue.

This part that the provincial government would work on would implement provisions which would limit the opportunity for predatory pricing. Predatory pricing is where the main gas companies would sell gas to their own distributors at a much cheaper price than they would to the independents to try to put the independents out of business. That really has to be stopped, "limit the damage that could be inflicted by discriminatory pricing practices," that the same price out of the refinery has to be sold to all retailers, regardless of what company they work for, and that would be very important, "and restrain the ability of refiner/marketers to create arbitrary price zones." This would greatly help eastern Ontario and northern Ontario, where from time to time prices are extremely high and extremely exorbitant, and that puts an undue burden on the people in our areas.

I'm really encouraged that the House is debating this this afternoon, that the government has put forward this

motion to ask the federal government for help, and that the Liberal caucus here has put forward an amendment to this that I think is helpful, that really maybe stops this game of pointing blame, as each government seems to do, that it's a federal responsibility versus it being a provincial responsibility, and maybe for once, if we could all agree on this together, we can say this is our problem collectively and both the provincial level and the federal level could say, "Let's work on this."

Let's call in the big boys from the gas companies and really start to put some teeth in some regulation here that would demand of them to have some fair pricing of energy across this province. I think that's the way to go and I'm certainly going to be supporting this.

**Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River):** I have listened intently to the speakers who have addressed this issue so far and I am a bit perplexed. I've listened to a number of the Liberal representatives and I'm not sure if they are supporting this resolution or not supporting the resolution. Hopefully, we'll get some clarity on that as the evening proceeds.

Let me say here and now that I will support the resolution. I do not think this is a perfect resolution, but I will be supporting the resolution and I want to point out why I'll be supporting it and what I think the critical issues are.

This is a critical issue. It's a critical issue for a couple of reasons. First of all, it's very clear that Ontario consumers across the province are being gouged in terms of gasoline prices. Secondly, if you are from northern Ontario, and many of us here in the Legislature are, you are being doubly gouged. The problem is twice as bad if you happen to live in a smaller city or a smaller town in northern Ontario.

Thirdly, there is another issue which creeps into this. I had some of our staff do some comparative pricing on this issue. I happen to live in a border community, so people in my community, if they don't want to pay the ripoff gasoline prices that oil companies are forcing on consumers in my community, can go across the border into Minnesota. Similarly, in a community like Welland which is on the border, if people don't like the ripoff prices that are being charged, they can go across the border and shop in the United States. Similarly in Sault Ste Marie, if people don't like the ripoff prices that are being charged by oil companies in Sault Ste Marie, Ontario, they can go across the border into Michigan.

Similarly Windsor: Let me give you an example of the difference. In Windsor the price today is 61.9 cents per litre. In Detroit across the border it is 45.8 cents per litre in Canadian funds. What that means — and I know what it means because I live in a border community — is these price differentials, the price gouging on the Canadian side of the border in Ontario will drive Ontario consumers across the border to buy gasoline, but once they're there buying gasoline, the temptation is to buy a lot of other things as well.

It's really a three-pronged issue here: Ontario consumers are being gouged across the province, consumers in northern Ontario are being gouged twice, and this will

lead very quickly, if action isn't taken, to a whole repetition of cross-border shopping which hurts border communities tremendously and hurts the Ontario economy tremendously. This is a very serious issue.

I want to say something about where I think the tools lie to address this. Clearly, the federal government has the tools to address this now. They have the Competition Act, they have the standing commission which looks into competition policy. The federal government is equipped to deal with this now.

1710

Even if the federal government were not equipped to deal with this, there is historical precedent which shows that the federal government can take action to deal with prices and wages when it feels there are unjustifiable increases. I point, for example, to the Anti-Inflation Board which was established by a Liberal government in the 1970s, only the problem they identified then and the problem they went after was people's wages, not necessarily prices. The federal Liberal government at this time has the tools to take action. If they don't feel those tools are adequate, they have shown precedents before that they are quite willing to pass legislation to go after something like this.

With that in mind, I find it passing strange indeed that the federal minister says he doesn't see there's a problem. I have to tell you, there is a huge problem, and at the federal level this problem has been referred to many times over the last couple of years and the last couple of summers. What it amounts to is this: The current federal government has a lot of excuses.

Let me give you some of the excuses they've used in the last couple of years. One summer they used the excuse: "The US refineries have closed for repairs. That's why Canadians are paying higher gas prices." I guess they mean that all the refineries in the United States all closed, and all closed at the same time. That was one excuse.

The other excuse that was given — and I invite you to look at the profit levels of the major oil companies in this country — was, "Record profits year over year aren't high enough yet."

Then there was an excuse, "There's a supply-demand imbalance." I guess that means consumers demand the gas and the oil companies reduce the supply. The following summer there was another excuse trotted out by the federal government, and it was, "Record profits year over year still aren't high enough."

This is the kind of action we've got from the present industry minister in Ottawa, John Manley. He has simply denied, summer after summer, occurrence after occurrence, that there is a problem. I would suggest to you that is the real issue with the Liberal government in Ottawa. They have declined to recognize that there is a problem at any time when it's happened over the last five years.

But the tools to do something about this clearly already exist for the federal government. The tools are already there. Why the federal Liberal government refuses to act, I can only guess at what the reasons are. They're too busy

defending the profits of the oil companies to take a look at the prices the oil companies are charging.

I want to go a bit further. As I said, I will be supporting this resolution. I'll be supporting it despite the fact that it is not a perfect resolution. Let me tell you why it has some imperfections. The reality is that if the current Conservative government of Ontario really wanted to push for action on gasoline prices, the resolution would say that should the federal government fail to use the tools that are available for the federal government to use right now, the province will enact its own legislation.

To me, that would send a very clear message to the federal government and to the oil companies. The message to the federal government would be, if you're on the side of the oil companies and you're going to behave to protect the oil companies, you're not concerned about the prices consumers are paying, then the Ontario government's going to take action. It would send a message to the oil companies that one way or another they'd better bring their prices down or risk being regulated.

That's what should be in this resolution, a clause that says clearly that if the federal government is more interested in defending oil company profits, if the federal Liberal Industry Minister is more interested in defending the oil companies than he is in stopping consumers from being gouged by high gas prices, then Ontario will act. It's very clear the provinces can regulate. The province of Prince Edward Island has a petroleum products act which in effect regulates gasoline prices and heating oil prices on the island. Why did they take action? They took action after they couldn't get the federal government to act. I would say this is open to the Ontario government at this time. If the federal Liberals won't act, if they won't enforce their own legislation, then the Ontario government should step in and protect consumers. That is the long and the short of it. That is why this is an imperfect resolution.

I want to go a bit further here and just delineate how and why folks in this province are, in some cases, being gouged twice, and also to expose some of the comments that have been made earlier. In northern Ontario, consumers are being gouged twice because prices are high in northern Ontario generally, and during the summer months, on weekends like the civic holiday in August, like Labour Day, yes, the oil companies push them higher. So consumers in northern Ontario are being gouged that way, but consumers in northern Ontario are also being gouged because this government, the Harris Conservative government, imposed a new motor vehicle tax on September 1.

The government may say, "It's a fee." Let me cite the member for Nipissing, who is now the Premier, who said so loudly and so clearly a few years ago, "A fee is a tax by another name." What you've done is you've imposed another tax on northern Ontario drivers. It's a \$37-per-vehicle tax. I would say to the government, if you want to be sincere on this, if you want to even appear sincere in your concern about price gouging in terms of gas prices, then for God's sake do away with your \$37 motor vehicle tax in northern Ontario, because you're part of the goug-

ing process here. You are definitely and clearly part of the gouging process.

I heard a half-hearted excuse from some of the government members. They said, "This new motor vehicle tax in northern Ontario is going to be used for more road repair work." Let me be clear on what's happened. This government, when they assumed office in June 1995, immediately cancelled all of the road repair and maintenance contracts across northern Ontario. No money was spent in 1995. In 1996, they further cancelled the road repair and maintenance contracts in northern Ontario.

What they're doing this year is they're pulling some of the money that was scheduled to be spent in 1995 forward, and they're pulling some of the money that was scheduled to be spent in 1996, and they're putting it into 1997 and they're saying, "We're spending more on highway and road maintenance." This is not going to fool anybody. Give it up. What you did is you totally cut the budget in the summer of 1995 so there was no road repair and maintenance work, you totally cut the budget in 1996 so there was no road repair and maintenance work in northern Ontario that summer, and you've put a little bit of that money now into 1997 to try to make yourselves look good. It's not going to work. The fact of the matter is, if you average it over four years, you are spending less than ever on road repair and maintenance work in northern Ontario and your motor vehicle tax is nothing more than a tax grab.

**Hon Chris Hodgson (Minister of Natural Resources, Northern Development and Mines):** Wrong again.

**Mr Hampton:** The Minister of Northern Development and Mines —

**Hon Mr Hodgson:** Get the numbers. Let's get the numbers out.

**Mr Hampton:** Let's get the numbers out and have a look at them. Look at what you cancelled in 1995; look at what you cancelled in 1996; take those and try to add them into 1997. You are down in terms of how much you are spending and how much you're doing for road repair and maintenance in northern Ontario. You're trying to spin that by the public, and it's not going to work.

I want to get back to the issue of cross-border shopping, because that is very critical here. The reality is, if you allow gas price differentials of 20 cents a litre in places like Welland, Niagara Falls, Windsor, Sarnia, Sault Ste Marie, Thunder Bay, my community of Fort Frances, you will start a process of cross-border shopping again which will literally affect not just those small operators who are trying to make a living selling gasoline; it starts to affect the whole retail sector in those communities.

1720

I would implore this government, if you're serious about this, first of all do away with your motor vehicle tax, the \$37 per vehicle, which just adds insult to injury to people all across northern Ontario. Then amend your own resolution to say very clearly that if the federal government will not use the tools at its disposal, if they will not

use the Competition Act, if they will not use the officials and the bureaucracy that has been set up in Ottawa to look at these issues, then the government of Ontario will pass legislation similar to what Prince Edward Island has passed to properly force down the gasoline prices.

I'll tell you something: If you amend your resolution to say that, if you put that in your resolution, I believe you will force the federal Liberal government to take the action they should have taken. If they don't, they're going to be incredibly embarrassed because it will be clear and evident to everyone that they are more concerned about the record profits of oil companies than they are concerned about the pocketbooks of consumers who are being gouged at the gas pumps.

Second, even if the federal Liberal government won't take action, I suggest to you that merely threatening to bring in your own gas regulation legislation will have a profound impact upon the gas pricing behaviour of oil companies in Ontario. They don't want to be regulated; they don't want to have their behaviour exposed. The mere threat that you will do it will force them to start backing down.

If you are sincere in this, the tools are at your disposal. Take a harder line with the federal Liberal government, put in a clause indicating that you are prepared to bring in your own regulatory legislation, and for God's sake do away with the discriminatory motor vehicle tax in northern Ontario, which is simply adding insult to injury.

Speaker, I want to share my time — I was informed by the table officers that I could share my time if I addressed this to you — with the member for Nickel Belt and the member for Sault Ste Marie, who I believe are ready to speak at this time.

**Mr Martin:** The issue of gasoline prices as it unfolds before us here in this House and across the country in the federal Parliament is obviously a very hot potato.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Martin:** I'm in the wrong seat. I'm just so churned up about this issue that I'll speak from anywhere on it. I appreciate my colleague from Algoma making sure I'm in the right spot.

This issue is a political hot potato that neither the government in Ottawa nor the government here in Toronto is willing to grab in their hands and do something with. That's unfortunate, because as the gasoline gouging issue unfolds in this province, people are being hurt, communities are being hurt and the economy of the province is being affected in some very serious and significant ways.

We heard the leader of our party, the member for Rainy River, speak a few minutes ago about the issue of cross-border shopping. He said: "It's going to happen. That phenomenon is going to get worse." I have to say to you that it's already happening. I was speaking to a small business person who runs a corner gas station in Sault Ste Marie. She said that last week when she heard the announcement by the Michigan government that they were going to increase their tax on gasoline, this was going to be good for the petroleum sector of business in my community because at that point things were working out

fairly well. They were having a good summer. People were coming across the river to our side, tourists for the most part, and fewer people were going over to Sault, Michigan, to pick up their gasoline, so they were doing quite well. When the Michigan government decided they were going to raise taxes, she was, to say the least, somewhat ecstatic because it was going to improve her lot.

Alas, only a day or two later she found out that the petroleum industry in Canada was actually going to increase the cost of gasoline to us by three times the amount that the Michigan government increased it in that state. So she was up on this big high and then bang, down again, because she knew what was going to happen. People were going to drive up to her pump, see the cost of gasoline and say, "Forget it." It's only 10 minutes across the river and that is where they were going. That is what is happening. I talked to people over the weekend when I was home. People who had decided not to go across the river to pick up their gasoline any more are doing it.

We have a hot potato here. We have the provincial Conservative government in Ontario not wanting to deal with it. We have the federal Liberal government in Ottawa not wanting to deal with it. Who is left? We have the newly rejuvenated NDP opposition in Ottawa taking a stand. My colleague the NDP member for Regina-Lumsden, John Solomon, just last week had a press conference in Ottawa and made a statement about this particular issue, and it's not the first time. Mr Solomon, in his critic portfolio and in his interest in his own constituents, has been working on this issue for a long period of time now. I have at least four or five pages of notes here, of stands Mr Solomon has taken, committees he has chaired and commissions he has been part of, trying to send the message to the government in Ottawa that we have a problem here of collusion and gas gouging that is hurting the people of this country in a major way.

Let me just share with you a couple of the comments of Mr Solomon last week to the people and to the federal government. He said: "The oil industry believes that either Canadians will sit idly by and pay these unjustifiably high prices, or that Canadians won't notice these increases, or that Canadians will buy the oil industry's latest incredible excuse for price gouging: tight gasoline supplies in the eastern US triggered by the shutdown of several key US refineries for unforeseen repairs. If this is their justification, why have gasoline prices in the US increased less than one cent a litre but in Canada they're up by 10 cents per litre?" That's what Mr Solomon had to say.

I suggest to you that we have here a case of collusion of major magnitude, and it is not just the industry. It's the industry and the two levels of government that stand to benefit by any increase in gasoline: the federal Liberals in Ottawa and the provincial Tories in Ontario.

There is a formula in place — this was shared with me by my colleague from Nipigon today and he will expand on it just a little bit when he gets a moment to speak this afternoon — that says very simply and clearly that when the price of gasoline goes up, the federal government gets more money in its coffers and the provincial government

gets more money in its coffers. If that doesn't show you justification for a collusion between three organizations, then I don't know what does. If that is not a smoking gun of some sort, nothing is.

1730

The argument I'm making here today is that neither the provincial Tory government in Ontario nor the federal Liberal government in Ottawa is willing to do anything about this issue except shoot at each other. It's really a joke.

Over the last week or two anybody who has been watching the newspapers and seeing — one day Mr Saunderson made the case the federal government really believes, which is that the free market should dictate and the price of gasoline doesn't matter, that that's the way it is and we have to deal with it. Then we had Mr Harris coming back, once he took a census of what people felt about this, saying: "This is awful. This is gouging. We have to do something about it. Let's call the federal government." Then we had the federal government coming back, once they'd been hauled on the carpet over this by Mr Harris, and Mr Manley said in a statement today that Mr Harris is out to lunch on this, that he doesn't know what he is talking about.

I think you're both out to lunch. You should both get down to business and do what you were elected to do: Protect the consumer of this country and this province and take on the gasoline industry, take on the petroleum industry.

If you think that's impossible, as you say it is, just take a look at the little province of Prince Edward Island, the smallest province in the union. They passed legislation and put it in the face of the petroleum industry: In Prince Edward Island they could not raise gasoline prices except where it fitted within the regulation that's in the bill.

I will end my few comments and turn the floor over to my colleagues by saying once again to the provincial Tory government, to the federal Liberal government, get real. Get down and get this job done. Stop playing with the people. Stop colluding with the industry. Take the vehicles you have at your disposal and do something concrete about this very disturbing and difficult issue that faces us today.

**Mr Len Wood (Cochrane North):** This is a resolution that I'm sure every member in this House is going to support.

I was pleased to see that Mike Harris overruled Mr Saunderson when he said that gas pricing was fair right across this province. We know that drivers out there are getting burned. That's one time I could congratulate Mike Harris, when he agrees that prices are too high, and for the resolution coming forward.

But I don't think it's gone far enough. I think there's going to have to be stronger wording in it or amendments brought to it that will force the Liberal government in Ottawa to make the changes that are necessary. They could investigate and come up with the changes and force the gas prices down if they wanted to, but the Conservative government in Ontario would have to put a message

in there that they are willing to do it if the Liberals in Ottawa do not want to do it.

In northern Ontario there are three or four good reasons why drivers feel they're being gouged. There's no public transportation in most of the small communities in northern Ontario, so you end up having to have at least two vehicles to be able to get around.

Gas prices have always been 10 to 12 cents a litre higher than in southern Ontario. The prices that are being paid in southern Ontario now, at 59 and 60 cents, are prices we've been paying in northern Ontario for a number of years. Now in northern Ontario they're up to 70 cents, in some communities they're 75 cents and in some they are 79 cents. In Hearst and Kapuskasing they were all 69.9 cents in the last weekend. The Northern Times in Kapuskasing has been covering the articles on it.

Two days ago Mike Harris, and Ernie Eves, the finance minister, decided to put a tax on all vehicles in northern Ontario. They decided that it's not enough that gas prices are high up there — "We're going to introduce a brand-new tax on all the vehicles in northern Ontario, \$37, starting on September 1."

That's in addition to the high gas prices we're paying, the long winters we have to put up with and the conditions we have that nobody else around here has.

I was convinced earlier that a Premier from northern Ontario would be standing up for the people of northern Ontario. We have a Minister of Northern Development who should be standing up there, but it seems they've all ignored northern Ontario and they've written it off and they're picking the pockets of people in northern Ontario. It's not right, it shouldn't be allowed, and they should take off that registration fee immediately and force the price of gasoline down.

**Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon):** I'll be brief and to the point. No question that we're being gouged in this kind of ménage à trois. There are three culprits: the big oil companies, the federal government and the provincial government.

Make no mistake about it: Harris can get up and say, "I know there's some gouging," and yet when we look at the revenue for the province, this government expects to take in \$1.9 billion this year, \$25 million more than last year. Premier Harris could have said, "No, you're being gouged, so during the summer months, during the gouging period when the frenzy is at its highest, when people in the riding of Lake Nipigon and Fort Severn are paying \$1.50 per litre, I, Mike Harris, will represent the people of Ontario and cut the tax to make up." Not only does he do nothing, but he has the gall and the audacity, because we give so heavily at the pumps, to say: "You're going to give more. Starting now you will pay \$37 more to get your licence."

Competition only goes so far, the essence of the free marketplace. When it comes to North Sea oil — and I track those things almost every day; I don't miss too many days — you look at North Sea oil in the morning, the overnight market, then you look at Texas crude, and prices in the past months have been anywhere from \$19 to \$21,

which is consistent with the marketplace. In other words, on the futures market there have been no real increases. It's when it leaves them that the fracas begins to unfold. It's when it leaves them that the main players, the boys' club, get together and do some price fixing, nothing short of that. Who pays? The consumer, again, again and again.

Our position is a curse on both your houses at the political level. The federal government and this provincial government have an opportunity through the tax system to lessen the pain impacted on the pockets of consumers. We don't have a choice. We need it to go to work. We need it for medical expertise. We need it, our sons and daughters, going to college. We need it more because we're up north, and yet it's only when they feel the pain down south that they begin to understand what we've been saying for years.

This issue, this argument, is residual, is perennial; it never goes away. What we're asking is that you take the tools, in lieu of this resolution that is not very strong, take the bull by the horns, and show them that the people are boss. We make them rich. This is an opportunity to enact a cut in provincial fuel taxes so that the consumer can benefit, nothing short of that.

The people of Lake Nipigon, the largest geographical riding in Ontario, have been suffering in relative silence for far too long. Let justice be done. Do what you should do. Stand up, get off your knees, get out of the back pockets of those who can run the fastest and do justice for all the consumers.

**Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma):** I rise to support the resolution, but I regret that it appears there's a lot of insincerity in this resolution. I put this —

**Hon Cameron Jackson (Minister without Portfolio [Seniors Issues]):** Now you're a psychiatrist.

**Mr Wildman:** No, I'm not a psychiatrist; I look at the facts, I look at the statements.

Members of the House raised issues about the increasing price of gasoline. I pointed out that the gasoline price in Wawa last week was 72.5 cents a litre. I understand that in Chapleau today it's 73.5 cents a litre. Other members raised the price of gasoline in their communities, raised concerns about it, and what was the response of the government? The Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism said the government wasn't interested in doing anything. He actually said that the prices weren't outrageous, that this was just the market and the market should be allowed to operate, and that the government believed in free enterprise and didn't want to intervene.

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Then we had the federal Liberal government basically saying there is no evidence. Mr Manley, the minister responsible, says that even though the Bureau of Competition Policy falls under his jurisdiction, he doesn't have any evidence that could get a criminal prosecution. Suddenly, the Premier of this province is converted at the gas pump, and he says: "There is gouging going on. We should move a resolution and take this resolution to a conference of federal and provincial ministers, to try and get the federal government to act."

I might have thought the government was really sincere about that, that maybe the provincial government wants some action at the national level, that maybe they are concerned about consumers of gasoline in this province.

What happened at the beginning of this month, thanks to the budget that was brought in by the member for Parry Sound as the Minister of Finance last spring? On September 1, northern Ontario, that part of the province that has been gouged all along with high gasoline prices and is now facing a compounded situation, had an imposition of a tax on motor vehicles.

Our government took the motor vehicle licence fee off motor vehicles in northern Ontario because we recognized the prices of gasoline were higher for drivers in northern Ontario. At the time we took it off, that price was lower than it is now. This government that claims to be concerned about the consumers in Ontario has increased the price, has brought in a \$37 vehicle fee, a tax on northern drivers.

This government isn't sincere about trying to protect consumers. If it was, it would move on its own. The federal government isn't sincere about trying to protect consumers. They say there's no evidence of collusion. It's about time somebody stood up for the consumers, for the gasoline users in this province. I hope that in passing this resolution we will have some action by the federal Liberal government and by the provincial Conservative government together to move to protect the drivers of Ontario.

**Mr Laughren:** I'm pleased to take part briefly in this debate. I find it almost weird the way this debate has taken place. We have the free-enterprise Tories, with their neo-cons and Reformers in their midst, calling for more government intervention in the marketplace. Are these the Tories we see, day after day, standing up on their hind legs and demanding that there be less government intervention? Are these the same Tories? I don't understand it.

The other thing I find very strange is that the Minister of Northern Development hasn't taken part in this debate today. He had every opportunity. He hasn't taken part in the debate at all. He's the one who sat idly by while the Minister of Finance for the province of Ontario socked it to the northern Ontario drivers with a \$37 tax on September 1.

One of the members opposite — I can't remember whether it was the member for Brampton North or the member for Rexdale-Bedrock — said, "If you take away the \$37 fee, where's the money going to come from?" Wait a minute now. Are these the same Tories who reduced our provincial income taxes and don't ask where the money's going to come from? They say the reduced taxes will create more revenue, so why wouldn't that apply to the tax on motor vehicles as well? There are a lot of contradictions taking place over on the other side.

Not only that, the provincial government wants to refer the problem to the federal Liberals who have said, "There's no problem." So wait a minute now. The provincial Tories are saying, "We want to refer this problem to the federal Liberals," and the federal Liberals already have said, "There's no problem." The federal Tories are

saying, "We want to refer this problem to the federal Liberals," and the federal Liberals already have said, "There's no problem." On what do you base your faith that the federal Liberals — God bless their souls — are going to do anything about this problem? They don't think there's a problem so why should they do anything about it? I don't understand this. I'm missing something. There's a piece of the equation missing and I don't know why that is.

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** I'm sorry to interrupt you but I want to just do a quick introduction, if you don't mind. Thank you, member for Nickel Belt.

In the Speaker's gallery is the Reverend, the Honourable Fred Nile from Parliament House in Sydney, Australia. With him is the Honourable Bryan Vaughan, of the Parliament of New South Wales. Welcome to both you gentlemen.

To the member for Nickel Belt, I apologize.

**Mr Laughren:** It was an appropriate time to intervene, because I want to conclude my remarks by saying that I am going to sit down now because — I'll tell you why before you applaud — I want us to have time right now to vote on this resolution, right this afternoon. So let's get on with the vote on this resolution.

**The Speaker:** Further debate?

**Mr Laughren:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Would it be appropriate to ask for unanimous consent to vote on this resolution this afternoon? I would ask unanimous consent to vote on this resolution before we have to make time for the Lieutenant Governor to come into the chamber.

**The Speaker:** The member for Nickel Belt is seeking unanimous consent to vote on this within the next five minutes. Agreed? No. Further debate?

**Mr Frank Klees (York-Mackenzie):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I wonder if we could seek unanimous consent to include Bill 142 in that vote.

**The Speaker:** There was no consent on the original.

**Interjection:** I thought there was.

**The Speaker:** No, there wasn't unanimous consent.

**Interjection.**

**The Speaker:** What are you on about?

**Interjection.**

**The Speaker:** Point of order, member for Sault Ste Marie.

**Mr Martin:** I just wanted to explain to the member that the gouging they're doing of the poor and the weak in this province is not the same as the gouging —

**The Speaker:** That is not a point of order. That's a point of debate, I'm sure of it. Thank you.

**Mr Bill Murdoch (Grey-Owen Sound):** Who says so?

**The Speaker:** Member for Grey-Owen Sound, how are you?

Further debate?

**Mr Bernard Grandmaître (Ottawa East):** I can assure you, Mr Speaker, that we're ready and willing to vote on this motion. Whenever the time comes we'll stand and we'll let you know exactly where we stand on this issue.

We've heard a lot of gouging and gas prices, especially from northern Ontarians, but I want to tell you that eastern Ontario is suffering as well. In Ottawa East, you can drive down Montreal Road and you could have the very same prices, and they're in the 62s and 63s. I think it's very unfair. I think this government has an advantage. I know that when Mr Harris was sitting on this side of the House he was always complaining about gas prices, not only in northern Ontario but right across the province of Ontario. Now he's accusing the oil companies of gouging the consumers and I think he's absolutely right.

But now he's blaming the feds. He's saying the federal government should move on this and not the provincial government. The feds are pointing a finger at the provinces and the provinces are pointing the finger at the feds. I think we should resolve this. Ontario, being the leader it is, should take the lead role and do something about it. Through the Constitution, they can regulate prices in the province of Ontario.

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This government has a golden opportunity, not only today to please the by-election voters, but has a major role to play in controlling oil companies. After all, it's fine to have their support — they always support the Tory government — but the Tory government has a responsibility to tell oil companies that enough is enough. We are reasonable people in the province of Ontario. You're trying to balance your budget. You've promised no tax increases, and yet gas prices in the province are continually climbing.

**Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich):** What about user fees?

**Mr Grandmaître:** And user fees. I think it's a user fee. You use your car and it becomes a user fee. You don't believe in user fees, you don't believe in tax increases.

**Mrs Pupatello:** That's what they said.

**Mr Grandmaître:** Exactly. That's what you're saying. I think you have a golden opportunity to stand today and say: "We're going to do something. We're going to work with the federal government and lower the gas prices in the province and satisfy our consumers." After all, you don't want to appoint an Ombudsman to fight for consumers in the province, so now it's your opportunity to do something and do it right and protect consumers, not only in northern Ontario but right across the province of Ontario.

**Mrs Pupatello:** I am pleased to join in this debate. I find it interesting, in terms of timing, that the government has selected today of all days to discuss the resolution. We've been talking about road safety issues. As members of the opposite party have indicated, there is significant concern about roads, the prices you pay, consumer concerns about roads. We have the perfect example today, where the member for Essex-Kent talked about what we were going to do with bus safety.

Here we were in the House today during question period asking, "Why won't you at least call a bill to committee?" We already brought this bill forward in private members' hour and it was passed. I believe it was passed

unanimously by all members of the House. We had a golden opportunity to do very much to improve road safety when students are going back to school, when those young children are back on school buses and heading back to school and back home again.

We had an incident in Windsor where we had a CBC journalist with a camera rolling who stopped and watched the children coming on and off buses yesterday. What happened when that camera was rolling was that the cars were wheeling right by the bus, even though it had the stop signs out and all the lights flashing. Obviously, the bill the minister wants to present in terms of road safety isn't sufficient. We have the perfect example in my home town. It's not working.

The member for Essex-Kent since his election has been begging the government to do something right away, offering up the bill. The bill was passed by members in this very House. In fact, you were saying all the right words, that you wanted this safety measure and you wanted it quickly.

You'll recall that the member for Windsor-Walkerville, our transportation critic, came forward with truck safety measures because of those flying wheels that were actually killing people. We begged the government: "Here's the information. We did your homework for you. Here are regulations you can bring in. Here's a bill you can pass to make the roads safer." We begged you to do it right away.

The government waited and waited again, and then they came out with a big fancy photo op, saying that here it was. Well, we continued our conversations with the families to see what was happening and what kind of contact they were getting from government. In fact, they weren't hearing anything at all, and even they realized the Minister of Transportation was doing all this as a photo op. You wanted all the big headlines as if you were really doing something, but in the end you didn't want to do it. All those people who pay all those big prices to go to your fancy fund-raisers were talking to the minister on the side, saying, "You know, this really isn't very good."

We had members of our caucus coming forward with actual detail that members of this House could bring into law and in the end you did nothing about it.

All of a sudden the consumers are at the gas station recognizing that the price is going up. Our member from St Catharines was on this the first day it was happening, after that first long weekend. He stood and begged, asked the Minister of Economic Development, "What are you doing about this?" That minister of this same government stood in the House and said: "There's nothing wrong with this. As a matter of fact, we can't be regulating gas companies."

That was your Minister of Economic Development. Is he not part of the same cabinet? Does he not sit at the same table? While Premier Harris is out talking to the press and getting all the stories about, "Boy, he doesn't like the gas gouging," you've got this minister at the cabinet table, and what was he saying? Our member from St Catharines told us that he said: "This is fair. Don't be

doing this to companies. It's not a Conservative government position to get involved in regulating an industry."

We've had lots and lots of examples of that, and this is just another. We know that the Minister of Economic Development usually speaks off the top. We asked him what he was doing about youth employment one day, and he stood up on his feet and he said, "We're going to freeze that wage for young people." That was the kind of response we got from the Minister of Economic Development.

Within two days of the minister being on his feet in the House saying they were going to do absolutely nothing about gas prices for consumers because it wasn't the government role to do anything — yet the stories continued and the consumers became more and more outraged. The headlines were there, and all of a sudden they realized what a golden opportunity they have.

**The Speaker:** Member for Windsor-Sandwich, I'm sorry to interrupt. If you could stop the clock for her time, I'd appreciate it.

I'd just like to inform the House that the Lieutenant Governor is waiting. I'm at the call of the House. It is the Lieutenant Governor, and I'm just seeking direction from the House. There's now five minutes for royal assent.

**Hon David Johnson:** Obviously, the third party and the government are prepared to vote on the issue at this point and call Her Honour in.

**The Speaker:** What I'm saying is, is this an appropriate time that we can adjourn the debate?

**Hon David Johnson:** If the opposition is not finished, then yes, I would suggest that course of action. I don't know if they're finished or not.

**Mr Wildman:** We have no further speakers. We would like to vote.

**Mr Bradley:** Mr Speaker, we're prepared to vote after we have our speakers who wish to speak on this issue this evening. We'd be happy to accommodate the government

by voting on this later this evening after we have our speakers who are on this evening.

**The Speaker:** Then the debate is adjourned, as I see.

**Hon David Johnson:** That means that the opposition is not prepared to deal with this item yet, in which case I would suggest that the debate be adjourned and, Mr Speaker, indicate to you that Her Honour awaits royal assent to certain bills.

*Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario entered the chamber of the Legislative Assembly and took her seat upon the throne.*

## ROYAL ASSENT

### SANCTION ROYALE

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** May it please Your Honour, we, Her Majesty's most dutiful and faithful subjects of the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Ontario in session assembled, approach Your Honour with sentiments of unfeigned devotion and loyalty to Her Majesty's person and government, and humbly beg to present for Your Honour's acceptance a bill entitled An Act to authorize payment of certain amounts for the Public Service for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1997.

**Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers):** Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor doth thank Her Majesty's dutiful and loyal subjects, accept their benevolence and assent to this bill in Her Majesty's name.

Son honneur la lieutenant-gouverneure remercie les bons et loyaux sujets de Sa Majesté, accepte leur bienveillance et sanctionne ce projet de loi au nom de Sa Majesté.

**The Speaker:** It now being just after 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 6:30 of the clock to-night.

*The House adjourned at 1804.*

*Evening sitting reported in volume B.*

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO**  
**ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO**

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenante-gouverneure: Hon / L'hon Hilary M. Weston

Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Chris Stockwell

Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers

Clerk Assistant / Greffière adjointe: Deborah Deller

Clerks at the Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Algoma	Wildman, Bud (ND)	Frontenac-Addington	Vankoughnet, Bill (PC)
Algoma-Manitoulin	Brown, Michael A. (L)	Grey-Owen Sound	Murdoch, Bill (PC)
Beaches-Woodbine	Lankin, Frances (ND)	Guelph	Elliott, Brenda (PC)
Brampton North / -Nord	Spina, Joseph (PC)	Halton Centre / -Centre	Young, Terence H. (PC)
Brampton South / -Sud	Clement, Tony (PC)	Halton North / -Nord	Chudleigh, Ted (PC)
Brant-Haldimand	Preston, Peter L. (PC)	Hamilton Centre / -Centre	Christopherson, David (ND)
Brantford	Johnson, Ron (PC)	Hamilton East / -Est	Agostino, Dominic (L)
Bruce	Fisher, Barbara (PC)	Hamilton Mountain	Pettit, Trevor (PC)
Burlington South / -Sud	<b>Jackson, Hon / L'hon Cameron</b> (PC) Minister without Portfolio (seniors issues) / ministre sans portefeuille (affaires des personnes âgées)	Hamilton West / -Ouest	Ross, Lillian (PC)
Cambridge	Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Hastings-Peterborough	Danford, Harry (PC)
Carleton	<b>Sterling, Hon / L'hon Norman W.</b> (PC) Minister of Environment and Energy / ministre de l'Environnement et de l'Énergie	High Park-Swansea	Shea, Derwyn (PC)
Carleton East / -Est	Morin, Gilles E. (L)	Huron	Johns, Helen (PC)
Chatham-Kent	Carroll, Jack (PC)	Kenora	Miclash, Frank (L)
Cochrane North / -Nord	Wood, Len (ND)	Kingston and The Islands / Kingston et Les Îles	Gerretsen, John (L)
Cochrane South / -Sud	Bisson, Gilles (ND)	Kitchener	Wetlaufer, Wayne (PC)
Cornwall	Cleary, John C. (L)	Kitchener-Wilmot	Leadston, Gary L. (PC)
Don Mills	<b>Johnson, Hon / L'hon David</b> (PC) Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, government House leader / président du Conseil de gestion, leader parlementaire du gouvernement	Lake Nipigon / Lac-Nipigon	Pouliot, Gilles (ND)
Dovercourt	Silipo, Tony (ND)	Lambton	Beaubien, Marcel (PC)
Downsview	Castrilli, Annamarie (L)	Lanark-Renfrew	Jordan, W. Leo (PC)
Dufferin-Peel	Tilson, David (PC)	Lawrence	Cordiano, Joseph (L)
Durham Centre / -Centre	Flaherty, Jim (PC)	Leeds-Grenville	<b>Runciman, Hon / L'hon Robert W.</b> (PC) Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services / solliciteur général et ministre des Services correctionnels
Durham East / -Est	O'Toole, John R. (PC)	Lincoln	Sheehan, Frank (PC)
Durham West / -Ouest	<b>Ecker, Hon / L'hon Janet</b> (PC) Minister of Community and Social Services / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires	London Centre / -Centre	Boyd, Marion (ND)
Durham-York	Munro, Julia (PC)	London North / -Nord	<b>Cunningham, Hon / L'hon Dianne</b> (PC) Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Eglinton	<b>Saunderson, Hon / L'hon William</b> (PC) Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism / ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et du Tourisme	London South / -Sud	Wood, Bob (PC)
Elgin	North, Peter (Ind)	Markham	<b>Tsubouchi, Hon / L'hon David H.</b> (PC) Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations / ministre de la Consommation et du Commerce
Essex-Kent	Hoy, Pat (L)	Middlesex	Smith, Bruce (PC)
Essex South / -Sud	Crozier, Bruce (L)	Mississauga East / -Est	DeFaria, Carl (PC)
Etobicoke-Humber	Ford, Douglas B. (PC)	Mississauga North / -Nord	<b>Snobelen, Hon / L'hon John</b> (PC) Minister of Education and Training / ministère de l'Éducation et de la Formation
Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Kells, Morley (PC)	Mississauga South / -Sud	Marland, Margaret (PC)
Etobicoke-Rexdale	Hastings, John (PC)	Mississauga West / -Ouest	<b>Sampson, Hon / L'hon Rob</b> (PC) Minister without Portfolio (privatization) / ministre sans portefeuille (privatisation)
Etobicoke West / -Ouest	<b>Stockwell, Hon / L'hon Chris</b> (PC) Speaker / président	Muskoka-Georgian Bay / Muskoka-Baie-Georgienne	Grimmett, Bill (PC)
Fort William	McLeod, Lyn (L)	Nepean	Baird, John R. (PC)
Fort York	Marchese, Rosario (ND)	Niagara Falls	Maves, Bart (PC)

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Niagara South / -Sud	Hudak, Tim (PC)	Sarnia	Boushy, Dave (PC)
Nickel Belt	Laughren, Floyd (ND)	Sault Ste Marie /	
Nipissing	<b>Harris, Hon / L'hon Michael D.</b> (PC) Premier and President of the Executive Council / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif	Sault-Sainte-Marie	Martin, Tony (ND)
		Scarborough-Agincourt	Phillips, Gerry (L)
		Scarborough Centre / -Centre	Newman, Dan (PC)
		Scarborough East / -Est	Gilchrist, Steve (PC)
		Scarborough-Ellesmere	<b>Mushinski, Hon / L'hon Marilyn</b> (PC) Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation / ministre des Affaires civiques, de la Culture et des Loisirs
Norfolk	Barrett, Toby (PC)	Scarborough North / -Nord	Curling, Alvin (L)
Northumberland	Galt, Doug (PC)	Scarborough West / -Ouest	Brown, Jim (PC)
Oakville South / -Sud	Carr, Gary (PC)	Simcoe Centre / -Centre	Tascona, Joseph N. (PC)
Oakwood	Colle, Mike (L)	Simcoe East / -Est	McLean, Allan K. (PC)
Oriole	Vacant	Simcoe West / -Ouest	<b>Wilson, Hon / L'hon Jim</b> (PC) Minister of Health / ministre de la Santé
Oshawa	Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)		
Ottawa Centre / -Centre	Patten, Richard (L)	Sudbury	Bartolucci, Rick (L)
Ottawa East / -Est	Grandmaître, Bernard (L)	Sudbury East / -Est	Martel, Shelley (ND)
Ottawa-Rideau	Guzzo, Garry J. (PC)	Timiskaming	Ramsay, David (L)
Ottawa South / -Sud	McGuinty, Dalton (L) Leader of the Opposition / chef de l'opposition	Victoria-Haliburton	<b>Hodgson, Hon / L'hon Chris</b> (PC) Minister of Natural Resources, Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre des Richesses naturelles, ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Ottawa West / -Ouest	Vacant		
Oxford	Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Waterloo North / -Nord	<b>Witmer, Hon / L'hon Elizabeth</b> (PC) Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail
Parkdale	Ruprecht, Tony (L)	Welland-Thorold	Kormos, Peter (ND)
Parry Sound	<b>Eves, Hon / L'hon Ernie L.</b> (PC) Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance / vice-premier ministre, ministre des Finances	Wellington	Arnott, Ted (PC)
		Wentworth East / -Est	Doyle, Ed (PC)
		Wentworth North / -Nord	Skarica, Toni (PC)
		Willowdale	<b>Harnick, Hon / L'hon Charles</b> (PC) Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
Perth	Johnson, Bert (PC)		
Peterborough	Stewart, R. Gary (PC)	Wilson Heights	Kwinter, Monte (L)
Port Arthur	Gravelle, Michael (L)	Windsor-Riverside	Vacant
Prescott and Russell /		Windsor-Sandwich	Pupatello, Sandra (L)
Prescott et Russell	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Windsor-Walkerville	Duncan, Dwight (L)
Prince Edward-Lennox-		York Centre / -Centre	<b>Palladini, Hon / L'hon Al</b> (PC) Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports
South Hastings /			
Prince EdwardLennox-		York East / -Est	Parker, John L. (PC)
Hastings-Sud	Fox, Gary (PC)	York Mills	Turnbull, David (PC)
Quinte	Rollins, E.J. Douglas (PC)	York-Mackenzie	Klees, Frank (PC)
Rainy River	Hampton, Howard (ND) Leader of the New Democratic Party / Chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique	Yorkview	Sergio, Mario (L)
		York South / -Sud	Kennedy, Gerard (L)
Renfrew North / -Nord	Conway, Sean G. (L)		
Riverdale	Churley, Marilyn (ND)		
S-D-G & East Grenville /			
S-D-G et Grenville-Est	Villeneuve, Hon / L'hon Noble (PC) Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales, ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones		
St Andrew-St Patrick	Bassett, Isabel (PC)		
St Catharines	Bradley, James J. (L)		
St Catharines-Brock	Froese, Tom (PC)		
St George-St David	Leach, Hon / L'hon Al (PC) Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement		

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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(Hansard)**

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(Hansard)**

**Wednesday 3 September 1997**

**Mercredi 3 septembre 1997**



**Speaker**  
Honourable Chris Stockwell

**Président**  
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

**Clerk**  
Claude L. DesRosiers

**Greffier**  
Claude L. DesRosiers

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# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 3 September 1997

# ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 3 septembre 1997

*The House met at 1830.*

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### SERVICES IMPROVEMENT ACT, 1997

### LOI DE 1997 SUR L'AMÉLIORATION DES SERVICES

Resuming the adjourned debate on the motion for second reading of Bill 152, An Act to improve Services, increase Efficiency and benefit Taxpayers by eliminating Duplication and reallocating Responsibilities between Provincial and Municipal Governments in various areas and to implement other aspects of the Government's "Who Does What" Agenda / Projet de loi 152, Loi visant à améliorer les services, à accroître l'efficacité et à procurer des avantages aux contribuables en éliminant le double emploi et en redistribuant les responsabilités entre le gouvernement provincial et les municipalités dans divers secteurs et visant à mettre en oeuvre d'autres aspects du programme «Qui fait quoi» du gouvernement.

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Further debate?

**Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland):** Bill 152 is one of the bills that's part of the Who Does What program, and it certainly does require considerable legislation. We've already been debating some of the bills: Bill 136 on the public sector transition; Bill 148, the city of Toronto bill; Bill 149, the fair municipal finance bill, and this one of course, Bill 152, having to do with the Services Improvement Act. It's a logical continuation of the Who Does What program.

For far too long we've had some very, very artificial boundaries around provincial government, around various levels of municipal government, and with that kind of tradition we have evolved into all kinds of duplication and overlap that really doesn't make all that much sense today. The previous government started talking a lot about disentanglement, but we're carrying it through under the Who Does What program.

Abraham Lincoln said, "You can't escape the responsibility of tomorrow by evading it today." We've come through years of evading change. It's time we faced up to the fact that change in the province of Ontario is indeed necessary, at the same time recognizing that it's not easy. I can understand why governments of the past stuck to the status quo — it's warm, it's fuzzy, it's comfortable — but we are getting on with change.

It's certainly no secret that the government of Ontario was indeed too big, too wasteful, too complicated and too expensive. We have a responsibility to ensure and to make government more simple, smaller, less expensive, less wasteful, and to increase efficiencies. That's really what the Who Does What program is all about.

It will result in savings for taxpayers. As a matter of fact, we're already seeing some of those savings with the reduction in the employer health tax and significant reductions in the provincial income tax, and as a result of those tax reductions, we are seeing a stimulus in the economy, a very marked increase in tax revenues. We're seeing spending is up because people know they have more dollars in their pocket. Car sales are up; housing sales are up; construction is up. Since March we've been creating in the province approximately 1,000 net new jobs every day. As you look at the jobs created across Canada, 56% of them are being created here in Ontario, so we must be doing something right.

The Fraser Institute reported recently, and I think it's rather interesting, on their monitoring of their tax freedom day. They reported for the first time in their history of records and living memory that tax freedom day is actually earlier this year rather than getting later. In 1996, the average family of four with two people working will actually be paying \$1,600 less in taxes than they did last year. The unfortunate part is that they will be paying a total of some \$29,000 a year in taxes, whether it be income taxes, property taxes, sales tax, luxury tax, gasoline tax, duties, and the list goes on.

It's also interesting to note that from 1985 to 1995, tax freedom day moved from May 25 to June 26, a full 31 days, one month or a 12th of the year. The previous two governments increased taxes enough that we had to work one extra full month just to pay for their increase in taxes.

We are in a financial crisis here in Ontario. It's interesting to note that the Chinese symbol for crisis is a combination of danger and opportunity. I see danger when I hear the federal government talking about balancing their budget and then saying, "How are we going to spend the surplus?" It's pretty simple. You pay off the mortgage. You get rid of some of that debt. There will be less interest to pay in the future, but that is a danger and they don't seem to understand that. With financial crisis there's a danger and an opportunity, but this kind of crisis also drives a change, and change is an opportunity knocking.

There's been one thing wrong, and I'll openly admit that, with the plan we have and the direction we're going, balancing the budget and the Who Does What program.

That mistake and the thing that's wrong with it is that it's 10 years too late. It should have happened 10 years ago when the debt was a third the size it is today. The difficulty in bringing it under control would have been far easier and it could have been done when other provinces, when other states, when other nations were doing that very thing.

Bill 152, the Services Improvement Act, will allow the government to sort out Ontario municipally, where the services should be, and those services will be provided better and at a lower cost to taxpayers. It will provide an opportunity to see that the services are delivered at the level that makes the most sense. It will assist with the reduction in duplication and also with getting rid of some of that overlap.

Bill 152 will assist with the smooth transfer of responsibility. It means having the right level of government providing those services. Municipal governments can provide the services which are closest to the people most effectively.

I can give you one example. That's in connection with the inspection of septic tanks, which we looked at with Bill 107, and this is moving it into the Building Code Act. It will be a one-window approach to construction of new homes. There will be one permit, one code to work under and one appeal process. During the hearings on Bill 107, we were hearing regularly from homeowners, from municipalities, from contractors, from the public, "We want a one-window approach." Of course, to ensure that it will be done properly, there will be mandatory certification of the inspectors and of the installers. We will require that there's always a certified installer on site whenever construction is going on.

This bill also transfers the public health program, social housing, land ambulance activity, child care services, GO Transit. Some of the position that we've ended up in has grown something like Topsy and it really didn't make too much sense in the position we ended up in. The design that we're putting through with Bill 152 when it's finalized will make an awful lot of sense, that where the services are supplied and managed on a local basis, they're also funded on a local basis.

When we looked at this, we did an awful lot of consultation. In responding to the needs of the public, we went out with the Crombie study, which involved a lot of people, particularly from the municipal level, looking at what we should be doing in the Who Does What program. We brought in most of those recommendations and put them out as a paper to study, to look at and to move under the Who Does What program.

This also involved transition teams working closely with the Association of Municipalities of Ontario. They came back later with a very strong recommendation back in the spring. We adopted almost all of it, with one small item that we didn't bring in. That was the 5% that trustees would be able to put through as a school tax. We felt that wasn't in order.

#### 1840

We have had in this whole exercise a tremendous amount of consultation. We have listened and we have responded in the areas that made a lot of sense to us.

Local government is indeed the best equipped to deliver the locally required services, it's best equipped to identify the local needs, and it's best equipped to respond to emerging conditions. Bill 152 will give to local governments greater control and accountability and will also give them the opportunity to be more autonomous.

Here at Queen's Park, sometimes you get the feeling that maybe there's a bottomless purse. At least that seems to be the way it was for the last 30 years. Just yesterday afternoon it was brought up by the member for Sudbury East about the mayor of Sudbury being concerned about the small amount that might be available for transfer and how he might have to go out cup in hand. I apologize that when I responded I mentioned Johnson, when in fact his worship was Gordon. But it exemplified what's been going on in the past with municipal politicians. One of their most important roles was to go out and lobby the province to get dollars to operate with, rather than looking at the kind of services they were delivering and coming up with the best way to manage their resources.

This kind of attitude, that there was a bottomless pit, a bottomless purse, money just magically appearing, was what has evolved deficits of \$5 billion and \$10 billion and \$15 billion. The end result has been that we have a debt of \$100 billion. We've gone through some three decades of budgets not being balanced. Although we might get some debate from one government, the government that followed that one certainly disagreed vehemently that the budget ever had been balanced, and they had a lot of billions to show a deficit where that budget hadn't been balanced in the late 1980s.

There are all kinds of examples of countries around the world that bit the bullet in the mid-1980s, from New Zealand to Australia to England to many of the states and to many of the provinces in Canada. That was a time that we in Ontario should have been doing the same thing.

Let me give you an example of a large community in Virginia. Ten years ago, Hampton faced a similar problem to Ontario: high taxes, an increasing debt load and businesses that were fleeing the community. They realized that major change had to occur. They turned the situation around. Downtown development now is surging ahead, property taxes are down and the debt has been cut in half. What they did was redefine the mission of that city government. They went from simply how to provide services with the money they could collect to managing the community's resources.

In the past, most management by municipal politicians has been how to lobby the provincial government, and they've been managing through silos of communities. We all have heard the stories many years ago when the fire truck went rushing down the side road only to come to the boundary and find that the fire was on the other side and having to stop there because, of course, that was the only place they would end up being paid.

Change means managing effectively all of our resources. Good management sees change as opportunity; it doesn't see change as a threat. Change may be described as opportunity dressed up in work clothes. Yes, change can be scary, moving into unknown territory and moving into uncharted waters. But Hampton, Virginia, with the financial crisis they found themselves in, moved to change, and opportunity was there to move them ahead by managing their resources. They looked at things like performance contracts and other modern management techniques. They have gone ahead with some 90% citizen satisfaction today and they are a leading public innovator in that state now.

It is also happening here in a community like Ajax, where they are also, I read, a leading innovator. They've turned their deficit into a surplus with no layoffs. They've used modern management techniques focused on quality, rewarded employee innovation, and chosen opportunity over threat.

If you don't grasp change and manage it, change will indeed grasp you and control you.

Bill 152 is an example of Ontario giving to municipalities the power and the tools to deal with a new and modern world, and certainly we are in a new and modern world. The Who Does What activity is sorting out those various roles, those responsibilities, so that we can eliminate waste and duplication.

Another area that we're looking at — it's rather interesting if you follow the transfer and use of land ambulance. At first I wondered, and then I looked at the reason for doing it, and it fits in and makes so much sense as you use a land ambulance. It's an emergency vehicle and it ties in so nicely with the firefighting services that municipalities supply and also with policing that most municipalities have been supplying and that in the future all municipalities will be supplying. They'll work hand in hand. It's a local need. It supplies the local people with what they need day to day, and it just makes so much sense.

However, to oversee and ensure that there are standards throughout the province, the province will set those standards. The province will also be the dispatcher and see that ambulances are sent out. We'll also look at the very expensive air ambulance that is required in some of our more remote communities, particularly in northern Ontario.

The Who Does What exercise is indeed revenue-neutral. We've heard a lot of debate about this, but on a provincial level I can assure you that it will be revenue-neutral. Approximately \$2.5 billion from the residential school tax, or roughly 50% of residential school tax, will be left with the municipality, which they can use for these services. We've heard an awful lot about downloading. This, if you want to talk about downloading, would in fact be uploading, I would gather. It's going in the opposite direction, and the province is taking over that portion of the education tax. At the same time, approximately \$2.5 billion of services will be transferred to the municipalities, covering things like water and sewer, transportation, social housing, land ambulance etc.

For years and years, since I was on a school board in the 1970s, municipalities have been pleading to get education tax off the residence. We offered that 100% off the residence until AMO, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, came back and said, "No, we would prefer only half of that, not all of it." We listened to what the Association of Municipalities of Ontario had to say and we responded. We not only responded to AMO but responded to those residents of Ontario who have been asking us for years and years to get education tax off their backs.

Bill 152 provides municipalities with the opportunity to do better, to see innovative solutions, to focus on customer needs and to reduce costs. It will do this by finding efficiencies, and they're best equipped at the local level to find those efficiencies. They'll do it by creating new partnerships, whether it's private-public partnerships or partnerships with neighbouring municipalities, and they will do it by finding new and innovative ways of doing things. We can indeed benefit from change and from reduced taxes.

The province has led the way. We have cut our internal costs by at least a third. We've reduced the deficit and we've reduced taxes. At the same time, we've absorbed the reduction in transfer payments from the federal government. That has not been easy but it's certainly something that this province has been innovative and has been able to accomplish.

Municipalities can also do the same. I'm sure that this fall, when the municipal elections are on, there will be voters out there observing what we have been doing and they will be looking to their municipal politicians and saying, "Can you in fact do better with less?" The innovative local politician will answer a very resounding yes and will follow the kind of example we have set in this province, not follow the kind of example of spending and borrowing that has gone on for the last decade which has put us into this position.

I am convinced that if the right people are elected there is no problem, that municipal taxes will be cut as a result of the Who Does What program and particularly because of Bill 152.

1850

**The Speaker:** Questions and comments?

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** This downloading exercise is certainly apparent to all of the municipalities and the agencies that are affected by the downloading legislation. The government can say all it wants about some of its Tory friends who showed up at the convention, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, but even many of the Conservatives who were there are absolutely appalled by the downloading exercise that is taking place. I know they won't want to have to defend Mike Harris and the Mike Harris government when they go into their municipal campaigns, because they'll have to stand up for the citizens of their own area.

For the life of me, I don't know why you're doing this. I look at ambulance service. To dump that on a local municipality, simply to isolate one, has to be a genuine mistake. What you're going to do is you're going to have

the American firm called Rural/Metro come in and take over virtually all of these ambulance services. You're going to see the costs increase substantially. That is the record wherever it happens. When the provincial government ran it, sure there were gaps and there were problems and from time to time they're raised in this House and they're very legitimate to raise. But the framework is far better than turning it over to the hodgepodge that will exist in the municipalities.

The other areas that you're downloading through the auspices of this bill are equally of concern to me as a local representative and as a member of the Legislature because I see genuine consequences for our municipalities. I see the polarization becoming even more apparent. As municipalities are compelled to impose more and more user fees, people of modest means and their children will not have the same opportunities to access themselves of government services at the local level as will the wealthy who do not need those services, who will be able to afford those. That's just one consequence of this downloading.

**Mr Len Wood (Cochrane North):** Bill 152 is simply a bill that is designed to force property taxes up right across this province. It's a matter of Mike Harris and his Conservatives trying to balance the budget and give a tax break at the same time. Now they're saying we're going to have a revenue problem there, so we're going to pass off all these services that the taxpayers right across the province used to pay through personal income taxes on to property taxes.

I've talked to mayors and reeves and councillors throughout northern Ontario and they don't know how they're going to pick up the millions and millions of dollars that Mike Harris is passing off on to them. They're going to have to either eliminate a large amount of employees and a lot of the services they've been giving or increase taxes 15%, 20%, 30%, 40%.

When they're saying that people can do more with less, the facts are not there. The information is not being given out to the people. At the same time, they're saying you're going to have to look after your own ambulances, you're going to have to look after your own social housing. Some communities in my riding are going to be hit with a bill of over \$500 for OPP policing. It was a Conservative government back in the 1970s that said if you want to get rid of your police force, the OPP will look after it. If you've got a population of less than 5,000, the taxpayers right across the province will be paying for it.

Now, with a new Conservative government, a Reform-Republican government, people are going to have to pay. Some areas they're going to have to pay as much as \$700 a household for policing. Then you add on all of the other services they're dumping. Bill 152 is simply a matter of dumping on to the municipalities and it's a tax grab by Mike Harris to give the 30% tax break back to the wealthy in his province.

**Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East):** For those who tuned in in the last four minutes, the sky is not falling, the sky is not falling. The bottom line is that, contrary to the fearmongering and the idle rhetoric we hear from the

other side after every bill and every rotation, the speaking order, the fact of the matter is we have mayors, and would-be mayors in the case of Mel Lastman here in Toronto, saying that Who Does What is not only revenue-neutral, he will guarantee that if he's elected taxes will not rise in Toronto.

We've had the same from the former Liberal MPP, the just-retired Bob Chiarelli, who has said that Who Does What is a wash. He has said that the transfer, not a downloading — there's as much uploading as there is downloading and the members opposite know that. It's a complete dollar for dollar transfer, an absolute wash. The Premier has said that and I'm going to take him at his word because the kind of fearmongering we've heard for the last two years hasn't turned out to be true.

My seatmate, the member for Northumberland, has very carefully presented a précis of this bill and has detailed how it is purely and simply the technical means through which this transfer can be accomplished. The bottom line is that the municipalities will now have the tools to more efficiently manage their affairs. Areas that by definition are really of only municipal interest will now be transferred 100% to their responsibility.

On the other hand, the subject of education which has vexed every municipal politician I've ever spoken to for decades, and every one of whom has called for the elimination of education from the property tax — well, we've gone halfway there.

We also have the minister saying that in the years to come, as this province recovers from the lost decade of mismanagement and we reach balanced budgets, we'll get the last half of education off there. This is an important bill, and I give my support to it.

**Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood):** I want to congratulate the member for Northumberland for his overview. One of the things I'd like to point out in his overview that I disagree with is that he mentioned the fact that you should pay off your mortgage before you spend money. As you know, what your government has done is, from the outset it has based its whole fiscal approach on the premise that you can give away this tax cut before you balance the budget.

In other words, you've given away up to \$5 billion and you forgo that revenue before you balance the budget. That's the critical mistake you've made. Because of that \$5-billion shortfall, your government has had to engage in exercises like downloading because your books could not be balanced, given the fact that you're forgoing \$5 billion in revenue. So you've been engaged in a variety of different exercises like the downloading where you want to get rid of certain items on your balance sheet and eventually push them down to the municipal balance sheet.

Really, at this state I know there was a disagreement between you and your fellow colleague from Grey-Owen Sound. Whereas you agree that you're a 100% believer in the revolutionary rhetoric, at least some members of your party do not believe 100%. They are questioning and really at this juncture nobody knows how much their tax bill will be. Can you predict what the tax bill will be like in your municipality, considering the dramatic changes? I

don't think you can predict that. If you can, please tell us what the tax bill will be in your municipality.

**Mr Galt:** Thanks to the various responders, the member for St Catharines, the member for Cochrane North, the member for Scarborough East and the member for Oakwood.

It's very kind of the member for Oakwood to pay me a compliment, that he followed it and agreed with a lot that I had to say. Unfortunately, he headed off on to one point where I have to disagree with what he responded on. He talked about paying off the mortgage and certainly that's a logical thing to do, to pay off the debt once you have some surplus rather than looking for some other way of spending it.

There's no question if you look at the increased tax revenue that we just wouldn't have that increased tax revenue if the income tax cut hadn't been made. It was explained to me, not by the party, not by the Common Sense Revolution, but by economists when I was knocking on the door campaigning. They talked about the Laffer curve, something I had never heard tell of before, but once you go over the top of that and start down the other side, once you increase taxes, revenue falls. There were all kinds of examples of that during the last five years in particular, at least 1990 to 1995. Once you give some of that tax back, it stimulates spending and it also ends up that by stimulating the spending improved tax revenues occur. It just necessarily follows, if you follow through that kind of thinking in economics, that's the way it happens, and they talk about it as a Laffer curve. I'd suggest you look that up and see how it occurs.

You commented also about predicting the property tax bill in the fall next year. Of course you can't predict that, because we don't know who is going to get elected and how they are going to like to spend money and how they are going to enjoy taxing the poor property owner. It's up to them. We'll ensure that it is revenue-neutral, but it depends who gets elected.

1900

**The Speaker:** Further debate?

**Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew North):** I want to join the debate on Bill 152 standing in the name of the Minister of Community and Social Services. The so-called downloading issue is one that we all face. I was interested to hear the previous speaker from Cobourg address the question. It is an interesting fact for me that many opposite talk about this issue as though the playing field were level everywhere in Ontario. If it were, if the province were one big Cobourg or if it were one big Whitby, then I suspect this would be a much easier matter. The difficulty is that like the Dominion of which we are a part, the province is very uneven in terms of population, in terms of wealth, in terms of a number of key factors.

I want to say something as a former education minister in respect of the current government. I'm sorry the Minister of Labour has left, because she'll know more about this than I suspect anyone, probably myself included. But where I thought Mike Harris showed some real guts — where he was a man apart from Bill Davis, Frank Miller,

David Peterson, Bob Rae — was on this whole question of educational finance.

Like a good iceberg, there's so much more of that under the waterline, but when I heard the original deal, I thought, "You've got to like that Mike Harris, because he is going to war with the all-powerful teacher federations, and that proves to me that he's got more guts" — other words come to mind — "than Bill Davis" or all those other people I mentioned. There's no doubt in my mind that when this original package was designed, the key piece of it was education, and not just the economics but, of equal or greater importance, the politics.

I think the previous speaker is right to point out that the government of which I was a part, the government of which Mr Laughren or Mr Silipo or Mrs Boyd was a part, have many sins for which atonement is forever due. But sins don't just attach to New Democrats and Liberals. On the education front, no greater public policy change was effected in this province than that made in the mid-1970s when the Davis government decided, after four or five or six years, that the so-called unbreachable expenditure ceilings would be lifted and that local school boards would have the right essentially to spend according to their local capacity to tax.

When that decision was made, wealthy school boards, not all of them, but most of them in southern Ontario, entered a new opportunity. A whole new spending profile unfolded, a whole new collective bargaining environment ensued, and we were off to the races. We had a sterile debate here through much of the late 1970s and all of the 1980s. Remember, some of you who were around, the so-called 60% funding formula? "When will the provincial government go back to the good old days when it paid 60% of the total education bill?"

We paid 60% of the total bill back in the early 1970s when there was a cap. Whether you were in Toronto, in Ottawa, in Rawdon township, in Hastings county or in the Ottawa Valley, there was a formula, an unbreachable ceiling. You couldn't spend beyond that, and your revenue was made up of three sources: provincial grants, local residential taxes and local industrial and commercial taxation. But when the Davis government, under enormous pressure from the teacher federations about 20 years ago, took that cap off, education spending took on a very different characteristic than it had had in the previous few years.

Now we get to Who Does What. As a former Minister of Education who, like Mr Silipo and everyone else, wrestled with this, when I saw Mr Harris announcing 18 months ago the old education deal, I thought: "You've got to like Harris. He's got more backbone than I had."

**Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon):** You'd never admit to that.

**Mr Conway:** I'm admitting to it publicly. But, you see, where the backbone is involved is in the following respect: If you're going to do what everyone wants, which is to have quality education in the classroom with parity reasonably around the province, you've got to go back to the decision Mr Davis made in the mid-1970s, and it's a lot

more complicated because if you want to have education as the centrepiece of the trade, you've got to do something about the fact that the two largest urban municipalities in this province have, in relative terms, enormous local wealth, and on the industrial-commercial side, I might add, more than anywhere else.

That has been the bedeviller in this debate for the last 25 years. Not very many people understand that. I was here for 10 years and I didn't understand it until that first briefing came when those very good people in the finance branch of the Ministry of Education sat the new minister down and said: "Well, now, Minister, here it is. This is the advanced course." After a couple of hours, I wanted to crawl away and never come out of my hole. But not Mike Harris. He's a tougher, braver man than I. So presumably he's got a plan, and the centrepiece of the plan and a big part of the plan is, as far as I can tell, going to war with the teacher federations. I don't know how you do it and not trigger that combat.

I don't mean to be fearmongering or mischief-making. I think it is a reality, and as somebody who was beaten up by those good people in the teacher federations, having lost more than I ever won — again I say to myself, "I've got to like that man Mike Harris, because he's going to do what Davis and Wells and Conway and Peterson and Silipo and Rae couldn't or wouldn't do." It will be news, important news in Willowdale and Rockcliffe Park, I can assure you, very important news.

When I saw my dear friend Hazel take the poor Premier down in the first round of the 15-round fight, I thought: "What does that tell me about the backbone of Mr Harris? Hazel just took him out in round one."

**Interjection:** And she's 75 years old.

**Mr Conway:** And she's 75 years old.

I just want to make the point that this business about reforming education is a little more complicated and a little more sensitive than most people understand, for a lot of good reasons. I will be interested. He's not here tonight, the judge, the esteemed member for Ottawa-Rideau, His Honour Garry Guzzo, he's in the papers most weeks now in Ottawa and he has figured it out. Garry knows what long hand is reaching into the local wealth of Ottawa-Carleton. I see this weekend in the Ottawa Citizen there are all kinds of stories about all kinds of schools going to close down, and yes, there will be more, because there is no easy, painless way to do this — except one, in the short term, and here I want to be a confessional again. Harris and Eves have luck almost as good as Peterson and Nixon in this one critical respect. When we took office in 1985, and I have to say again —

**Mr Pouliot:** With our help.

**Mr Conway:** — with your help and, to be perfectly frank, with much more help from Frank Miller than anybody else. When we took office in 1985, there were a couple of things that I remember. One, we inherited a fiscal plan of the Harris-Miller government that called for an end-year deficit of approximately \$3 billion. Hard to believe, isn't it? That was beyond the pale of the terrible 10 years. When we took office in June 1985, we inherited

a fiscal plan that had a deficit projected in the neighbourhood of about three billion bucks. It wasn't the first multi-billion-dollar deficit of that first half of the Tory decade, and I'm not going to be bold and take you all through that tonight, but when I hear the endless palaver about the 10 lost years, I always think about that \$3-billion deficit that we inherited — for some good reasons, I might add at another time.

**1910**

But we were lucky in a way that Mike Harris and Ernie Eves were lucky. The economy was growing at a much more rapid rate than had been called for, projected. So the old coin kept rolling into the treasury at a rate that did make Bette Stephenson and Frank Miller fulminate, as they ought to have fulminated, because our luck was a lot better than their luck just 12 months before.

I noticed in this year's budget that revenues for the year just ended, the fiscal year that ended on March 31, 1997, the province reported approximately \$2.3 billion more in revenue than was called for in the May 1996 provincial budget. My guess is that for this fiscal year, the year that'll end next March 31, on the basis of everything I hear revenues will be about \$3.5 billion above projections. My guess is Ernie and Mike are going to be tempted to do what Bob and David did 10, 12 years ago.

When I hear the declaratory statements out of the first minister at AMO — and I tell you, he was nothing if not declaratory: "This will wash. There will be no loss. I guarantee it" — I think there's only one way he can guarantee it, and for the next year or two he will have enough money by means of which he can keep that guarantee. He is at this very hour, the chancellor of our exchequer, swimming in excess cash. He's not the only one.

I see that the other day in Washington the General Accounting Office, which last year projected that this year's US federal deficit would be \$150 billion, has now revised the figure down to somewhere in the range of \$48 billion to \$52 billion. The financial press this week is now indicating that Her Majesty's Dominion government up in my part of the province, up at Bytown, may in fact be in a real surplus situation very soon, with the beneficial factors being higher than projected growth and lower than expected interest rates. So the magic is working in Bytown, in Hogtown and in Foggy Bottom down in Maryland, lest anyone think that there is a particular elixir that has stimulated the financial genius of old Toronto.

But that's my guess. My guess is that our declaratory Mike is going to solve his short-term problem by just opening the gullet of these municipalities, on the one hand, and opening the public purse of our provincial government, which I will bet will have at least \$3 billion more in the purse than has been projected. You know, if you've got \$2 billion or \$3 billion extra, you're going to have some manoeuvrability. Trust me, it gave us some manoeuvrability that, in retrospect, perhaps we ought not to have had. But it doesn't deal with the long-term situation.

My friend from Hastings and I sat in a session in Kingston a couple of weeks ago, and so did our friend Mr Rollins from South Hastings.

**Mr E.J. Douglas Rollins (Quinte):** Quinte.

**Mr Conway:** Quinte. Great place, Quinte. I've got lots of stories about Quinte. There were other members there as well, but some of the people on the administrative side who attended that meeting I have known for a long time and they're not, in my experience, fearmongers; they're not, in my experience, partisans. They brought to that table data that I thought were very nearly unimpeachable. I think particularly of the Frontenac presentation. These are people who've been around this question of intergovernmental finance a lot longer than any of us in this room and they are simply incredulous. They have no idea how these numbers add up.

I was reading the other day, as I usually do, the *Cobourg Daily Star*, where a certain Doug Galt is on the front pages, as he sometimes is. It is interesting because, according to the *Cobourg Daily Star* of Friday, August 22, there are a number of municipal leaders who are equally incredulous about Dr Galt's recitation of the data.

But I'm prepared to give this a chance. My county in Renfrew, which does not have a very strong tax base, is telling me that no matter how you cut this, this is tens of millions of dollars that they're going to have to find. I repeat something I've said before. In my county, the largest in the province, population 95,000, running from Arnprior to near Mattawa and out to near Bancroft — just to give you an idea, that's like Toronto up to about Barrie and down to London. That's the empire that is Renfrew. In that empire, the largest single landlord is the provincial government. I don't think there's anybody who has turned their mind to the question: Who's going to pay the taxes for the biggest single landowner in my county?

You've heard me go on about these roads and these ambulances, and I've used this in question period. On a good weekend there are tens of thousands of people in Algonquin Park and, as we found out this summer with that tragic incident where that young boy was very nearly killed, ambulance services are important. Who's going to pay?

I can't wait to see how this scheme is going to work. I've checked what the minister has had to say, I've checked with local municipalities, and I'm not getting any answers whatsoever. I don't doubt there are answers, but there are a lot of questions that remain to be answered.

I want to come back to the centrepiece on education — on educational finance particularly. I, for one, will watch very carefully. My guess is that what you're going to have to do is establish a formula and the formula, with some adjustment for large versus small, rural versus urban, north versus south, is going to go back to a formula that says: "This is the recognized expenditure for an elementary student in the province. This is a similar recognized expenditure for a secondary student, whether he/she be in Etobicoke, Exeter, Renfrew, Barry's Bay or Bancroft, and that's it. We are going to fund on that basis."

If that's what you do, God help you if you're the member for Etobicoke West. God help you if you're the member from Rockcliffe Park, Ottawa-Vanier. God help you if you're the member —

**Mrs Helen Johns (Huron):** God help the kid from Huron the last 20 years.

**Mr Conway:** The member makes a very good point. The history of empire is everywhere and always that the smaller, poorer win out, don't they, Helen?

**Mrs Johns:** Kids all deserve the same education.

**Mr Conway:** I couldn't agree more. You have embarked on a course of action that seeks that as its ultimate and beneficial end, and I will sing a *Te Deum* of praise to that end. I will watch carefully to see what instruments are developed to give it effect.

This, I have to believe, is the centrepiece, but everything I hear lately, everything I hear from people inside the ministry — they're very professional and I only go to the odd little session where they talk about the new developments — tells me that King Mike is backing away from the fight. King Mike, who that famous day about two years from this past spring, said at the Royal York — remember? — "I'm not very good with numbers."

It turns out that he was basically telling the truth. The numbers are not pretty.

*Interjection.*

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**Mr Conway:** The member from Brampton wherever says something inaudible.

Again, I will be very patient. I am going to be very patient. I just simply conclude my remarks tonight by saying that the only way this can be made to work, in my view, is either you keep your word on the original re-tooling of educational finance and take all of the pain that comes with that, and there will be a bipartisan group of former ministers of education quietly cheering, or you will lose your nerve, you will back away, you will dip into that multibillion-dollar windfall and hope and pray that it gets you through the night until at least the end of 1999, all of the turmoil and bad public policy notwithstanding.

**The Speaker:** Questions and comments?

**Mr Pouliot:** You will understand, of course, if I'm a little hesitant to be on my feet responding to the insight, to the comments from a person who is regarded by many on all sides to be perhaps the most eloquent, the best orator in this House.

The member for Renfrew North spends a lot of time at the local library here and some time in the real world as well. He's a very busy person. He will confess, Bishop Conway, or profess to know about education, having been there in the capacity of the premier spokesperson, that of the Minister of Education, and yet in a lower tone, readily admits, confesses again, that he doesn't know as much about public financing. But since bishops must make a ruling at times, he does point a finger to the government of the day and accuses them of a grab extraordinaire which is about to come.

He would have wished to have more time, because he wanted to mention that \$7.7 billion, slightly less than the overall cost of education — elementary, secondary and post-secondary education, not factoring in the teachers' contribution — comes from the coffers, from the general fund, and the other \$7 billion, and that's what he wished

to focus on, comes from the pockets of the taxpayers — 50% — and the largest two municipalities, those of Toronto, which is richer in assessment and, second, Ottawa, are about to get it big time.

We will have time to follow through on what the most distinguished and eloquent Mr Conway has begun to say. It's one component of the downloading. I thank you, Speaker, and thank the member.

**Mr Jim Flaherty (Durham Centre):** I listened with interest to the comments of the member for Renfrew North. I don't share his pessimism with respect to the ability of people to change and institutions to change in our communities.

I, along with other members of the Legislature from Durham, had the opportunity last week to meet with our public utilities commissions, and there are many of them in the Durham region. They have their buildings, and in fact they have 40 commissioners in the one area of Durham region. They took the initiative. They realized that we need less government, fewer politicians, as we promised to do when we were elected in 1995. They don't have their heads in the sand. They're not opposing change. They're saying, "We can do better," and they're trying to create ways of doing that, generated within our own community of Durham region. That's just one example.

The member for Renfrew North talks about teachers and the education system. We see in Durham region in the month of August teachers taking their own time and spending their own money to be trained and upgraded in their training by the Durham Board of Education, which is renowned throughout Canada and around the world for its ability to train and upgrade teachers. These are teachers adopting the new curriculum, being positive in their attitude, saying that we need change, saying that kids come first, saying that there are revenues in the system that need to be concentrated in the classroom. Unlike the opposition, they understand the need to reach higher and do better.

A lot of this, I think, is a matter of attitude, of being positive, of realizing that we need to concentrate limited resources in the proper places to benefit our children and our grandchildren. This involves some restructuring and some change, which many people in our society accept and view positively.

**Mr Colle:** I certainly appreciate the comments of my colleague from Renfrew North. As you know, back in the early 1970s there was a famous CBC documentary called *The Best...Fiddler from Calabogie to Kaladar*. I think what we have here today is maybe best spinner from Calabogie to Kaladar.

He made a very eloquent case for the people living along the Opeongo trail who are going to be asking him, and they're going to be asking a lot of the MPPs now, whom they never asked before, about the property tax bill. For the first time in recent history, that is going to be taken to account to the MPPs, because in essence, in an attempt to supposedly figure out who does what, everybody is now saying, "Who is on first?" They don't know who is doing what any more.

What started off as being a complete eradication of education from the property tax, as you know, has now gone back to a half eradication. There's a lot of confusion along the Opeongo trail. There's a lot of confusion throughout Ontario.

I think the member for Renfrew North is right in saying, "God help all the members," because you're going to be taken to account for that. I noticed that when the member said, "God help the member for Etobicoke West," the member's father showed up in the gallery, the esteemed politician-administrator, who knows what it means to balance the books at the local level.

Over the generations, local politicians haven't done a bad job, but this government is now saying: "We have all the answers. We have reinvented the wheel and this wheel, although it's square, is better than the round one you've been using." I think everybody is from Missouri in saying, "Show me." That's what they'll be saying: "Show us the tax bill."

**Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt):** It's certainly always a pleasure to listen to the member for Renfrew North. You will understand when I say it's particularly so for me when I hear him talking about education, as he has done tonight, at least the financing parts of it, because he and I share some common ground on that in that we were both for some period of time responsible for some of the policies and some of the decisions made in that field, including with respect to the area of education financing.

I also just want to note for the record that I recall a certain member for Etobicoke West continuing to ask me from time to time when I was Minister of Education how we were coming with our then promise of returning provincial funding to the 60% level, a quite accurate reminder by the member for Etobicoke West in those times.

When I put that against where this government says it wants to go, by removing education off the property tax, as the member for Renfrew North talked about, we of course note that far from being that kind of a direction, what this is in this bill and in all of the actions that surround it in the other legislation to come, and indeed in all of the pieces that they do without having to resort to legislation, it really is not doing what we ourselves, when we were the government, were not able to do, certainly what the Liberals, when they were in government, were not able to do, which is to remove education off the property tax. Because that's not what you're doing.

What you're doing is you're compounding the situation. You can claim at the surface level that you're taking 50% off the cost of education, but in fact what you are doing is just compounding the problem by shifting down the cost, as you know you are, of many other services, the social services and many of the other areas, which at the end of the day are not going to mean that people are going to have any clear idea about who is responsible for what. What it will mean is higher property taxes for the average household, all of that so you can just keep your promise of reducing income taxes. But you will have done it at the end of the day at the cost of increasing property taxes and that, quite frankly, will be the result.

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**Mr Conway:** Just a couple of responses. Mr Flaherty from Durham Centre left the impression, and from my point of view a wrong impression, that as far as he was concerned, I was one of those who felt that Ontarians were somehow resistant to change. Nothing could be further from my view of the genius of Ontarians. I think Ontarians have over the decades shown themselves to be a very adaptable, flexible population.

I must say, and here I probably do differ from some members of the current administration, the Ontario that I thought I knew was a province that was given to evolutionary change. My curse now may be that I am, despite my occasional outburst, a moderate man living in immoderate times.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Conway:** I'm serious. One of the things I note about our politics is just how incredibly immoderate it is becoming. People talk about revolutions and scapegoating, and some of it I understand. It's been a very gut-wrenching and difficult time. It's not just what you find in Ontario. But when people talk about revolutions, they're not talking about the kind of evolutionary change that I think has made Ontario the kind of place it has been. The trouble with revolutions is that people get hurt, glasses are broken, and there is a lot of breakage around. I say to Mr Flaherty, change in Ontario, absolutely: consistent, creative but generally evolutionary change. I hope we have not abandoned that very important, positive part of our patrimony.

**Mr Silipo:** I want to join in this debate and I probably should note for the record that I'm doing the leadoff presentation for our caucus, although I'm not sure that I will actually go the entire hour.

I do want to put a few things on the record. Bill 152, which we are now in the second day of second reading on is in some aspects, as I think I heard one government member describe it, a technical bill, in that it sets out what's going to be shifted here and there. I will go through some of the pieces of the bill in the course of my remarks, but we know that what it does and what it mainly serves as is the frontispiece for the download exercise that this government is embarking upon.

We know that some time ago Mike Harris and his government decided that part of the way in which they were going to find money to pay for their 30% income tax cut was by shuffling around responsibilities between the provincial level and the municipal level. In that equation, education plays a big role because part of the exercise that the government we know is engaged in is reducing the public contribution that they now make and that governments previously have made to education. Beyond the cuts that they have made so far, the almost \$1 billion that they have already cut, there is more to come.

Beyond the area of education, which as we know is funded today some 60% from the property tax base and 40% from the provincial coffers directly, beyond the education costs and the education portion of the property tax, there is of course the rest of the property tax system,

which municipalities are now responsible for levying, and it pays for a whole array of services.

What we have here is at the surface level an exercise by this government that says, "We're going to try and sort out the responsibilities and who pays for those responsibilities between the province and the municipalities." It sounds like a pretty noble endeavour. It sounds like a pretty good and useful objective. What politician among us here at the provincial level or at the municipal level could disagree with the notion of simplifying for the average voter, for the average resident, for the average taxpayer — the one taxpayer Mike Harris used to remind us exists, and I note no longer quite so readily reminds us of — how could any of us be opposed to the notion that that one taxpayer should know in a much clearer fashion than exists today who is responsible for what and who pays for what?

Part of the problem with what the government is doing is that the exercise is not about sorting that out. It might have been at some beginning stage of the process. I don't quite believe that's what it was even in the beginning stages, but there are some who might believe that's what it was about when it began. I should say there are undoubtedly some pieces of it that will result in a clarification of roles, but when you look at the picture, when you look at the overall impact, when you look at some of the major pieces, let alone the whole big picture result, what you see and what you have at the end of the day is not a simplification of the roles, is not a straightening out of who is responsible for what and through what tax contribution we're going to fund and pay for certain services versus others. What you have instead is a clouding of those areas, but more significantly, what you have at the end of the day is a push on to the property tax base not only of costs that shouldn't be there, but also of more costs than exist on the property tax base now.

Of course government members from the minister to the Premier, to any of the government members right on down, will continue to tell us that this at the end of the day is going to be an even wash. They'll point to their transition fund, they'll point to their community reinvestment fund and say, "Yes, we understand that in the trade back and forth there are going to be some inequities, but we've got a fund of money set aside and we're going to use that to balance off any of those inequities that exist."

I don't buy that, and more important than that, many people out there don't buy it, from the general public to the local politicians who have to implement these changes and who have to try to explain to the voters and the residents in their areas. We see growing day by day a worry and a concern about what is going to happen. Why is that? Because what we are seeing is that people are beginning to understand more and more clearly that this is not about an even trade, is not about a sorting out of responsibilities; it is about downloading some \$1.2 billion of costs that are currently borne by the provincial level of government on to the property tax base.

Even if you factor in the famous community investment fund which as it now sits is about \$570 million, you still

have a shortfall of almost \$650 million that municipalities will have to pick up. That's just in this trade among some of the issues and services that are covered by Bill 152. That's without even beginning to look at some of the other changes that are coming with the reassessment and the move to market value assessment, or actual value assessment as the government wants to call it and as the bill and the legislation call it, so that I guess is what we need to call it. But we know that what that will be is another way to increase property taxes in many areas of the province. Certainly in the area I represent, that's what's going to happen.

That's what we see, that's what we're going to be finding and that's what municipal politicians are now beginning to realize more and more, and I think with greater and greater interest. As they get closer over the next couple of months to the municipal elections, they are beginning to realize that they are going to be the ones who have to carry the can for Mike Harris and company, and they're beginning to say, "Sorry, folks, it's not me who's making this decision, it's not us who are causing these increases to happen, it's Mike Harris."

I have to say that I believe the government members were a little bit surprised by the reaction they received at the AMO conference last week, because I think that they didn't expect quite the kind of outrage, quite the kind of result, quite the kind of response that we saw from the AMO representatives.

These are local politicians, by and large, as you know, conservative-minded folks, many of them not just small-c conservatives but big-C Conservatives, and they almost unanimously have said to this government: "Sorry, Mike, not us. We may agree that restructuring is necessary" — and they do agree that restructuring is necessary. "We may agree that some cutting has to be done" — and some of them agree that has to be done. "But we're not going to be the front person for you. We're not going to carry the hatchet for you. We're not going to be out there on the front lines defending your actions any more."

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That's the message I heard pretty clearly from the AMO conference. I'd have to say it's got some of the government members just a little bit nervous because I'm sure they also heard the same message over the summer break as they were back in their ridings and talked to many of those same politicians but, more importantly, I'm sure they heard many of the same things as they were out talking to the residents in their own ridings.

The results we saw in the polls, whatever value one attributes to polls, I think have kind of shaken the government members a little bit and have pointed out to them that people out there aren't all buying any more this notion of the Common Sense Revolution, that it goes against the grain of the way in which Ontario has evolved and should continue to evolve, has in fact evolved to this point, in recent memory certainly, with the exception of this two years that we've now had Mike Harris at the helm.

While Ontarians, I think, fully understand and are prepared to accept the need for change and are prepared to

accept within that even the need for less money to be spent by governments at all levels, as much as I may not agree with some of those views, that's the reality that I think is out there among the general public that they're not prepared to accept.

What I think the government is hearing more and more strongly from people across the province, as reflected, as I say, in the AMO conference but much more broadly than that, is that people are not prepared to see for the sake of budget cuts, and certainly they're not prepared to see for the sake of an income tax cut, basic services like education and health care being put on the chopping block to the point where those same basic services are put at risk. It's not a question of people not being prepared to look at innovative ways or looking at ways to provide those services more cheaply; it's not a question of people saying, "Yes, the status quo is acceptable and we want no change at all." It's not that at all.

I think all of us to a person would agree that one resounding point of agreement across the province is that people not only are prepared for change, people understand the need for change and all of us as politicians understand that we have to be responsive to that. We have to understand and we have to be responsive to that sentiment out there, but we would be very wrong if we read that sentiment to mean acceptance for the kind of gutting of our basic services of health care, education and social services that the Mike Harris government is bringing about the province.

When we look at Bill 152, we see not just that message so clearly being reflected, but also the vehicle for doing that — at least one of the vehicles for doing that. I know that when we talk about some of these bills, which relate so directly to the government's overall fiscal agenda, and when those of us here on the opposition benches, certainly here in the NDP caucus — I speak for ourselves; I'll let the Liberal members speak for themselves — take the time to berate the government, to bring them to task about what they are doing at the broader level and tie the piece of legislation to that issue, some of the members not only become uncomfortable but become a little bit irritated and they say: "You're not talking about the legislation. You're not talking about the bill that's in front of us."

I want to make sure in the time I have that I actually speak directly on the bill, as well of course as the issues that I've already touched on and that I will come back to in terms of how this bill relates to the rest of the government's agenda.

Let's take a look at Bill 152 and what it does. As I've pointed out, the basic premise and the basic backdrop to the bill, the reason why this bill exists is to allow Mike Harris to put in place a part of his downloading exercise which will result in certain costs being pushed down on to the property tax base in exchange, as he puts it, for some of the education costs coming on to the provincial level. As we've pointed out, we don't believe that's going to result in an even trade and at the end of the day we're going to see more costs being put on to the property tax base.

What is happening through this bill? One of the first areas that is being affected by this bill is health care. The first section deals particularly with respect to the changes to the Ambulance Act and the Health Facilities Special Orders Act. What does this mean? This means we're going to see the push of a large part of the growing cost of health care on to the property tax base.

You've got at the same time going on, remember, the closing of many hospitals across the province, planned and some to begin in the next year to two years. You've got, on the one hand, Mike Harris reaping the profits through the provincial coffers of the savings as some of those hospitals are closed and you've got, on the other hand, the cost for ambulance services being pushed down to the local level.

Of course, one of the things we've heard throughout this debate in terms of this whole exercise — I'm not sure I've heard it in the debate on this bill yet — is that what the government is doing and what has led the government to this point is the work that David Crombie did. David Crombie, it's interesting enough to note, did not recommend the push of ambulance services down to the property tax base; he recommended the opposite. What you're doing is not taking his advice on this one, but what we've got is that not only will this mean a push down on the property tax base of the costs of ambulance services, but we're going to have a further dilution of the services that we have in place now.

We're going to end up with a situation with greater confusion, not less confusion, across the province as we have potentially the up to 800 municipalities all involved in the delivery of services eventually for ambulance services. You're going to have municipalities being responsible for funding of it, the province still trying to keep some control of it and the municipalities having to work out a whole morass of cross-border issues. In the end, rather than having greater clarity, what we're going to have instead is greater confusion among the public about who's responsible for what.

At the same time, while all of that is going on, there's certainly no guarantee that as both emergency and non-emergency medical transportation costs increase, the quality of those services will be maintained. We know that right now we have 172 ambulance services across Ontario. Those are run in a multitude of ways, in a variety of ways. Some are privately operated, in fact the majority of them are run privately, some by municipalities — we have the exception certainly here in Metro of that being the case — some directly by the ministry and some in a variety of other ways.

But the important thing is that there are not 100 different stakeholders involved in terms of the different jurisdictions, but at least a limited number of jurisdictions, and what you're going to be doing is taking a system that, by and large, is working and you're going to sort of spread that out into a thousand different pieces.

It reminds me very much of the concept of fixing something that isn't broken all, the government says, because they need to have this piece of funding into the mix. Well,

I don't know who it is who's been asking for this because what you need instead of what you're doing is greater coordination of ambulance services. The last area you want to have some confusion in when people are in need of services is an ambulance service. When there is an emergency, the last thing you want is confusion about how that service is going to be delivered, about how it's going to be provided.

What you want is to be able to have greater coordination among areas when you get outside of the larger metropolitan areas to be able to know that people can get to the hospital when they need to get to the hospital or to the nearest health care facility as quickly as possible. We're talking here about a service that's to be provided in emergencies. We know that as you close more and more hospitals across the province, the travelling distances for those ambulances are going to be greater than they are today. What you're likely going to have developing is a situation in which there will be fewer of those, because if municipalities can't afford to provide the services at the same level we are providing those services today, then it's going to be the general public, and it's going to be the public in need during an emergency that is going to suffer.

#### 1950

To tie this back to how the government is going to treat people who deliver these services — again we're talking about a very specialized area here — it's interesting to note that the government has rejected the retention of sector bargaining when the responsibility for ambulance services is going to be downloaded to municipalities.

We know that the municipalities here have said that if they have to pay, then they want to be able to control the service. But again what you're going to have at the end of the day, it seems to me, is a greater scattering of services rather than a bringing together of those kinds of services. That's one of the areas in this bill I have some concerns about and I'll be interested in hearing more about this as the discussion continues.

Let me talk briefly about another area that is also in this bill. One of the things this bill does is to affect regulations of septic systems. A responsibility that is currently under the Environmental Protection Act is being shifted to the Building Code Act. On the surface, the reason for doing this seems quite reasonable. I understand the rationale of the government is to be able to say that when people apply for building permits and they need to put in place a septic system, they should not have to deal with two different pieces of legislation and two different bodies etc. That part of it seems to have some logic.

But we know that in transferring responsibility for the approval of septic tanks to municipalities, you're going to have a growing situation where municipalities simply won't have the resources to do that job effectively. Then you have a situation again in which this is one of the services where we will see a reduction in the quality of services and a reduction in the protections that now exist under the Environmental Protection Act, because I don't see a reflection in the new legislation of the same kinds of protections.

If it was just a question of shifting those responsibilities and putting them under the building code, one could accept that. One could even come around to seeing the logic of that. But when it is a reduction of the kinds of protections that exist now for the average public and the impact that is going to have on our environment, that is something I, for one, would have some problems with.

Let's look at another section of the bill: schedule C. I know the Minister of Community and Social Services has much vaunted this particular move and has said, "We are going to make it mandatory for municipalities to provide their 20% funding to child care and for child care across the province."

On the surface it sounds like a very good idea, but you know what? This is something I know a little bit more about because I spent some time in the Ministry of Community and Social Services, and this does not resolve the problem that exists in our child care system. Simply mandating that municipalities will continue to pay for 20% and saying municipalities have to do that is not going to get you any big winners across the province.

You might resolve the one or two situations where you have municipalities that continue to waver between, should they continue to provide funding or should they not continue to provide funding? Quite frankly, the case for having child care has been made and will continue to be made locally and across the province by people who believe in and know the need for the service.

This is just again taking a big problem, trying to fix a little bit of it and then saying, "Look, we've fixed the whole problem." If you had the courage, what you should be doing in this area is going completely in the other direction, and that is taking responsibility at the provincial level for the funding of child care.

But we know that is not consistent with the direction you're moving in. One of the first changes you made, when you became the government, in the area of education and early childhood education was to stop the early years program we had begun as a government. That program was going to be a bridge between child care and kindergarten, provide a program that is already the norm in many countries of Europe, particularly, that provides an early start to youngsters, and instead you are moving in the opposite direction.

We have seen it with respect to the opening of the doors to privately run child care centres and we see it as just tinkering. It continues to create problems between the ministry, the province and municipalities. It does not deal in any useful way with the issue of child care.

To deal with the issue of child care, you need to be moving in terms of recognizing the value of public funds being invested at the provincial level in that important area and you need to continue to see — you need to start to see because you haven't even begun — the social and pedagogical value of doing that for our young people, for our children, for our young children particularly. At the very least, if you're not prepared to go to that step, recognize that child care is a service that should be funded from provincial coffers and should not be tied to the whole area

of welfare. While there is clearly an overlap and for many people it is tied together and that part of it needs to continue to be there, as we want to try to get people off the dependency of welfare, we also have to provide child care, that is only one part of it.

We know that a good child care system needs to continue to be provided with adequate funding from the provincial level, but it also needs to be set on the premise that it goes far beyond simply the tie it has to people on social assistance, that it is a service that is needed for all working families and all working parents, whether their only income is the money they get from their social assistance cheque or whether they are making \$50,000. It is not the income that makes it relevant or makes child care a real need; it is the fact that people have young children. It's a fact that today, either by choice or by need, in most two-parent families both parents are working. It is also part of the reality of our society today that where you have more and more single-parent families, the only real way those single parents can be out there working in the job market or in education or training programs, getting themselves back into the job market, putting themselves in the position where they can take care of themselves and their children, is in knowing there is a good child care program for their children during that time.

That can't be done by having this continued situation of child care staying in limbo. It is an area that, as I look back at our years in government, I wish we had been able to move further on. One of the regrets I have is that we did not. This government is simply taking a small piece of the big problem that exists here and saying, "We're going to make sure that municipalities now take up this particular piece," which they are already doing now. I'm not sure whom you're going to please with this one. I'm not sure what the problem is that you think you're going to fix by doing this.

Schedule D of the bill deals with public health units. We know that right now public health programs are cost-shared 75% by the province and 25% by municipalities outside the Metropolitan Toronto area, and 60-40 province-municipality here within Metropolitan Toronto. We're looking here at a budget of about \$211 million in terms of the provincial costs, and we have these costs now being put down on to the local tax base.

Again one could say some of those perhaps make some sense. Some of those costs, as we know and as I've said, are already being paid by the property tax base, but when you push this kind of system down, essentially you're going to have a situation — when we get through to clause-by-clause of this bill, and I'm assuming that at some point in committee we'll be able to point out some of the problems that exist as this is being done — where at the end of the day you're going to put municipalities into a bit of a squeeze. This is one of the areas where right now, because of the joint funding that exists, there can be some pressure put on where it's necessary, but in fact an understanding among municipalities and within each municipality about the need to provide for these services, to provide the variety of services that is being provided through the

various public health offices that are overseen by the local public health boards and the even more local entities that exist in some parts of the province, certainly here in Metropolitan Toronto the local board of health, and the various individual advisory boards in different parts of the city and the cities.

**2000**

What you're going to be doing by pushing these costs down on to the property tax base is putting more pressure on the municipalities with respect to their ability to maintain that level of service. Again, it's the same kind of thing that we are seeing in piece after piece of this. We're going to see it here I think in some ways, and ironically in an area where again the track record across the years has been that this is one of the costs that one can make a case should be more and more rather than less and less in the provincial area of responsibility in terms of funding. If you were going to move in any direction, this was an area where you could make a good, strong case for moving the funding more towards the provincial level rather than the other way around. But of course in the great equation of things that the government had to come up with, this was also one of the pieces, at least to the tune of some over \$200 million, that had to be pushed down so that they could make the balance sheet look equal.

Another piece of this bill, in schedule E, deals with GO Transit. Again, the basic premise that's being put into law here is that GO Transit is going to be paid for by the municipalities. That again is an interim measure. I understand that the minister is going to apportion the costs between the GTA municipalities and Hamilton-Wentworth, because we know that here in the GTA, as the minister is getting ready presumably to move towards the Greater Toronto Services Board, we will then see a realignment of those responsibilities and those costs.

We know that the government is intent on shifting the responsibility for GO Transit to the Greater Toronto Services Board, something which by and large I think is actually not a bad idea, and I'll undoubtedly have more to say with respect to the Greater Toronto Services Board on another occasion. But we know that here we have the government pushing down these costs, interestingly enough, before they know exactly what the situation is going to be in terms of the overall costs, and more importantly on this one, in terms of the overall structure. While we've seen an indication from the government that the Greater Toronto Services Board is the direction they're going to be moving in, we have yet to see the legislation. We have yet to see what's going to happen, and I'll be looking forward with great interest to what is to come on that.

The last section of the bill is the one in schedule F that deals with social housing. Here again we have financial responsibility for the provincial share of all social housing being transferred to the municipalities. Again, in a similar fashion, we've got the minister — the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing in this case — giving himself the powers to determine on his own the costs and to allocate them to municipalities. The costs are being pushed on to the upper-tier level in particular, and the minister of

course is giving himself the power to be able to push them on to the lower tier, to impose at least a cost-sharing formula among lower-tier municipalities where he, for whatever reasons, believe that's the case.

We know that in this area of social housing there continues to be great interest and great debate. Why? Because, as our leader pointed out just this afternoon and as we've been saying all along in this debate, if there is an area which we can categorize as a bit of a sham, this is it. This is an area where the real costs that are being shifted down are nowhere near being on the table. We know there is some \$536 million or so that's estimated to be needed for repairs on the public housing stock. As municipalities realize that they are going to be saddled with those responsibilities, with those costs, I don't think they're going to be so thrilled about the idea of taking on the public housing stock and being responsible financially for that.

We know the concern that exists, as we saw reflected particularly by the large urban centre mayors. When they asked the government for an analysis of those costs, the government said, "Yes, of course we will do that." Here we are weeks later and that study has yet to begin. Here we are weeks later and we're no closer to people understanding the real impact that's being shifted down on to municipalities in this area. Here we are weeks later and we're no closer to understanding that in fact what's being shifted down is nowhere near an even trade. Perhaps that's what worries the government, that municipal leaders are beginning to realize, are beginning to understand, and that's why the mayors of the large urban centres asked for that analysis, for that independent study, to say, "Show us what the real cost is, including the repair costs."

If, as I believe is the case, and more importantly as people who understand this area of services and are experts in this area are pointing out to us increasingly, the costs here are not just the annual costs that are on the ledger now but have to also take into account the state that the housing is in and the repair costs that are going to be needed, that if you disregard those, you can hardly say you're providing an even trade in dollars, and when you factor those in, if you do it in any kind of a fairminded way, you've got to deal with the \$500 million that you haven't factored in, well, then, you can understand why municipalities begin to get just a little nervous about this notion of simplification, about this notion of just buying the government's notion that it's all going to be an even wash. They know that it's not, they know that they can't explain it to their electors out there and they know they are not going to be prepared to play that role on behalf of Mike Harris and his government.

And so when you look at each of these areas, we have to come back to the basic message and the basic direction of what Mike Harris is doing through this piece of legislation. It's simply dumping costs on to municipalities. It's simply saying that at the end of the day we're going to see the property taxpayer end up picking up a much larger cost, a much larger share of these costs than exists today.

I have to say I've found it really interesting to see what the government has done, what the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and the Premier have done with respect to how this whole area relates to particularly here in the Toronto area. As a member from the Toronto area, I want to just spend a couple of minutes on this issue.

We have heard and we had heard for some weeks now the growing concern that existed particularly within Metropolitan Toronto about the huge download that was taking place, but it wasn't until your own transition team, set up to put in place the new megacity here in Metropolitan Toronto, some time in the early part of the summer pointed out the shortfall. Yes, there was a shortfall — first thing they pointed out — and by the way, that shortfall was some \$450 million of additional costs being pushed down on to the property tax base.

All of a sudden, because the transition team said it, the government could no longer ignore it. If it was the member for Dovercourt saying it, he was being partisan, but when it was the head of the transition team whom you appointed, a team of hand-picked people that you appointed and your minister appointed, you could no longer disregard that reality that we had pointed out to you and that others from the municipal level had pointed out to you for weeks and weeks before then.

What did the minister and what did the government do? They decided that even at the risk of alienating some of their friends in the 905 area, they were going to now spread the costs of social housing, public health, social services and ambulance services across the GTA.

Again, at a surface level, I have to say that makes some sense. If you're going to have this crazy situation in which you're going to insist that these services be paid for through the property tax base, then there's some logic in saying they should be paid for through the property tax base of the whole area that benefits from those services.

**2010**

I know that municipal leaders here in the GTA of course don't agree with that. Those within Metropolitan Toronto tend to say, "Yes, that's the way we should do it." Those outside of the Metropolitan Toronto area, in the surrounding area of the GTA, tend to say, "No, no, no," because of course they don't want to see their property tax base having to pick up some of these costs.

The reality is that there is probably some useful truth somewhere in between those two positions. There is some truth, as I see it at least, to the notion that says many of the services that are provided geographically within the area of Metropolitan Toronto are in fact provided not just for the benefit of residents in the Metropolitan Toronto area, but indeed are provided for the benefit of and are used by people in the greater Toronto area, particularly in those parts of the GTA near to the Metropolitan Toronto area. There is some logic to the notion that says if you're going to have these costs at the property tax level, then the property tax base for those services needs to be done at the whole GTA level.

I look forward with some interest to the members from the 905 area — my friend Mr Clement who is here from

Brampton, and others, members from Mississauga — trying to explain that and trying to sell that and trying to defend that in Brampton, in Mississauga, in York region.

I will just say this to them tonight: If they're having any community meetings and they would like participation from the third party, I would be happy to be there and to listen to what their residents have to say. I look forward to listening to Mr Clement's explanation and his defence, because word has it that he's not particularly happy about this direction that the government has taken.

**Mr Pouliot:** It's a tough sell.

**Mr Silipo:** Some of my colleagues are saying it's a tough sell. It's got to be a tough sell, especially when you began this whole exercise with the notion that if anybody was going to get it in this process, it was going to be Metropolitan Toronto, and you were going to do everything you could to protect the 905 area.

I say to the people in the 905 area who may be following this — although I hope to God they've got better things to do at this time of the evening — I want to say very clearly that I have nothing but the greatest of respect for people who live in the 905 area. Many of my family now live in the 905 area. They too have made the transition from 416, the Metropolitan Toronto area, out to the great 905. It isn't them that I am in any way being critical of; it is what this government has tried to do. They now hold every seat in the so-called 905 area. They had made sure that in every action they have taken in this downloading, in all the changes that have come about — you will recall all the debates and discussion we've had in this House with respect to the megacity, a major change in Metropolitan Toronto with very little consultation. But of course there's an understanding in the 905 area that no major change would come about without real discussion. I applaud the application of that notion to the 905 area. That's what should have been done here inside Metropolitan Toronto as well.

Here you have an interesting situation where government members have said to their local politicians and their local allies in Brampton, in Mississauga, in Oshawa, in York region: "Don't worry about it. None of this stuff is going to create a problem for you. We've got it worked out so that if anybody is going to suffer at the end of the day, it's going to be those folks down in Toronto. Some of our folks there are going to have it a little rough, but we're prepared to sacrifice some of them if we have to, but not here in the 905 area." Now my colleagues, at least from within Metropolitan Toronto, are going to be able to look to their friends and their colleagues outside and say, "You guys are going to have to share some of this pain too."

We can have some fun with this, but the important point and the serious point that needs to be made here is that this is not the way in which you make good policy. This is not the way in which you go about making decisions. The bottom line here is not how you make a bad decision more palatable all around or how you make everybody bear the brunt of a lousy decision. What you do, if you have the courage of your convictions, is admit that this is not a very good decision, that this is not a very

good policy direction, that having the costs of social services, public health and social housing picked up in greater quantity now through the property tax base is not good public policy, is not making the responsibilities between the province and the municipal level any clearer, any better. It's making it more confused and it's making it worse. It means that at the end of the day people will be more confused rather than clearer about who is responsible for what, about who is funding what, and at the end of the day it means that everyone, through their property taxes, will be paying more.

What does that mean? Why is it that when we come back to that notion — it's not just some kind of esoteric notion about what should or shouldn't be paid for through the property tax. It's because we know that, regardless of the many systems that have been put in place over the years to try to deal with some of the inequities, a property tax base remains the most unfair system of taxation we have. It's one of the most regressive, probably on a par with the sales tax.

That's what's wrong about shifting more and more of the costs on to the property tax base. It means that at the end of the day, it's families of average means and modest incomes that are going to be paying more. By lowering income taxes as the government is doing, and for which reason all of this is happening, it means that at the other end of the scale it's people who are better off, people who are richer, to use a simple term, who are going to be benefiting. So you've got tax reductions for the rich and tax increases for the rest of us. That's the Mike Harris world. That's the Mike Harris reality. That is the Mike Harris revolution: tax cuts for the richer citizens, tax increases for the rest of us. One gets a cut in the income tax, or benefits more greatly from that, and the rest of us get stuck with an increase in property taxes.

Now, we'll hear lots of stories. My friend from Scarborough — we'll hear lots of stories about politician after politician standing up during the campaign for public office throughout the province who have all been saying: "Don't worry. We'll be able to fix this so that there's not going to be any increase in taxes."

**Mr Gilchrist:** You trust municipal politicians, don't you?

**Mr Silipo:** It's not a question of trusting or not trusting municipal politicians. By and large, the people who are speaking I have a great deal of respect if not trust for. It is that the choices those politicians are going to have to make at the end of the day are going to be: Do they increase taxes? Do they cut services?

**Mr Gilchrist:** Or do they cut waste and mismanagement?

**Mr Silipo:** Waste and mismanagement. The favourite catchphrase of this government is you can cut waste and mismanagement. Of course you can, whatever little is left of it. They seem to forget so conveniently that school boards, municipalities, and all other public entities for that matter, have been cutting their budgets long before they came to the provincial table. They have been cutting their budgets long before the Common Sense Revolution was

even an idea in Mike Harris's head. Municipalities, school boards, children's aid societies, all of them have been living with less. All of them have been making those cuts; all of them have been trimming that fat. There's not a lot of it left.

What you're dealing with now are really some basic choices. Do you cut services? Do you increase taxes? Those are the choices. What this government is saying is: "We want to be on the side of cutting taxes. Therefore, municipalities, you deal with the nasty stuff. You be responsible for making the hard choices about cutting services or increasing property taxes." That's what this exercise is all about. That's what this is all about.

## 2020

As I came back from the summer break, for the first time perhaps in the last couple of years I had some sense that people were not just understanding — because that understanding of what the Mike Harris revolution is all about started a long time ago. That started back with Bill 26 a while ago and just kept building slowly but surely, and with the whole debate on the megacity here in Metropolitan Toronto we certainly notched that up a few steps and people understood what was going on.

But finally, we saw the reflection a little bit in the public polls, a little bit in the nervousness that came with the members of the government back from the summer recess. We are seeing that now even in the area of labour relations. The Premier just days ago was saying: "Bill 136 is sacred. This is it. We're doing it." Now he and the Minister of Labour are saying, "Yes, we're prepared to talk to representatives of labour," something they should have done before they introduced this legislation. We'll see what comes out of those discussions; we'll see if there is any truth to that.

But I can see Mike Harris now beginning to feel a tad nervous and saying, "If there's any way we can appease labour, any way we can put a soft face on this" — and Mike Harris the other day at AMO was doing the same kind of thing, reassuring people, giving his own word that at the end of the day this would be an even trade. Well, time will tell.

As the member for Renfrew North pointed out, perhaps the few members of the government who know better than the rest of us what the real projections are for the next couple of years know something they're not prepared to tell us yet. Perhaps they see a rosier picture in terms of income to the province coming in, so perhaps they see that they can crank up the \$500 million in transition assistance a little beyond that.

I don't know what it's going to take. I don't know what the government's going to do. But I do know this: If the government doesn't do something, if the government simply persists in this downloading exercise through Bill 152 and the other pieces of legislation that we've yet to see, at the end of the day we're going to see increased property taxes. There are no two ways about it. We're going to see all that being done so that Mike Harris can keep the one promise. If all other promises are put aside,

the one promise he will want to keep and is intent on keeping is the 30% income tax cut.

As I look back at the Common Sense Revolution, the basic premise of that promise was made on the point that "Everything we're going to do here is going to create jobs." In fact, they promised 725,000 of them. Then I look at what's going on, even with the economy picking up here in Ontario and throughout the country, for which we are obviously happy. We are not seeing — from the government's own figures, not mine — job creation anywhere near those targets. We're not seeing it because jobs are not going to be created by the methods the government believes in. Jobs will not be created in the way the government says, through this trickle-down effect.

Having spent a few weeks this summer in another jurisdiction, I saw the way in which government can play a real role. When I was in France earlier this summer, one of the headlines on one of those days, August 21 — I'll end with this. The headline was, "Aubry dévoile son plan emplois jeunes." That says, "Aubry," the Minister of Labour in France, "presents her plan for youth employment." There are 350,000 jobs being created in the public sector, with 350,000 to come in the private sector, by the government putting in funds on a cost-sharing basis with municipalities and with other local entities to create new jobs — not to replace other jobs, to create new jobs.

That, as I see it, is one positive way in which governments that want to create jobs can take steps to do so, not by the kind of filter-down economic policies that we see from this government, pretending that by providing tax cuts people are going to go out and spend that money and create those jobs. They're not there.

You can point to job growth. I'm not for a minute saying that there isn't job growth. Of course there is. But the point is, what job growth, where is it, how much, and compared to what? At the end of the day we're going to see a situation in which the job growth will not be there, and we'll be there to remind Mike Harris and company, the smiling faces across the floor, that in their own words the whole reason for the Common Sense Revolution was supposed to be to create 725,000 jobs.

They didn't say, "We want to do this because we're ideologues who believe in shifting more money to those who are already well off and taking it away from the rest of the citizens." They said, "We want to do this in order to create 725,000 jobs." I don't remember the exact words because when they cleared out the desk, they also took the Common Sense Revolution, but I believe I remember correctly. On the first or second page, it says, "Everything being done is being done to create those 725,000 jobs."

**Mr Gilchrist:** Right on.

**Mr Silipo:** The member for Scarborough East says that's right on.

That's the promise that was made. We will see at the end of the day how close we get to that. I know they're not going to get anywhere near that amount. But what is sad is that by the time we get to the election, by the time the government has to account for its actions, we will have seen an Ontario develop where our health care system is

in worse shape than it is today, our education system is in worse shape than it is today, our social service network is in worse shape than it is today, as thousands of people have already been pushed off any sense of support by this government; we're going to see support for our young people nowhere near the level it needs to be; and we're going to see people and families of modest means paying more taxes through increases in property taxes and user fees, and we're going to see, at the other end of the scale, people who are more well off, people who are already rich, being richer.

That's going to be the Mike Harris revolution. That will be the result of the Mike Harris revolution, not more jobs. While there certainly will be more jobs created than there are today, that began to happen even in 1995, when we were still the government, so let's look at things in a real context. The Mike Harris legacy at the end of this mandate will be an Ontario that is meaner than the one we've come to know, an Ontario in which the rich will be richer and the rest of us will be poorer, in dollars and in the services we have today. That's the result, that's the situation, and I think the people of Ontario are more than beginning to realize that that's the Mike Harris revolution.

2030

**The Acting Speaker (Mr Gary L. Leadston):** Questions or comments?

**Mr Gilchrist:** Once again we've heard from the soothsayers, seen the crystal ball reading more doom and gloom, more suggestions from the third party that the mandate we were given in 1995 was all wrong, that the millions of Ontarians who voted for us who read that Common Sense Revolution, who agreed there was a need to turn this province around, to give hope back to the people of this province, to give prosperity back across all the economic segments, were wrong. Well, to our colleague opposite, I suggest that forecasting and soothsaying is probably a field he should stay out of, because the last two years would prove otherwise.

The same negativism, the same doom-and-gloom message, has been spread from the opposition benches since day one, and what have we seen? Over the last few months we've seen the creation of over 1,000 net new jobs a day. We've seen a 22% increase in consumer confidence. We've seen an over 40% increase in housing starts. We've seen a record increase in car sales. We are seeing growth and prosperity in this province unprecedented in the last 10 years.

To our colleague opposite, it must be very tiring and frustrating knowing that your message has no resonance out there in the real world. The bottom line is that this bill is, as are all the bills we bring forward, very much part of keeping our promise to the people of this province, very much part of fulfilling the mandate we were given on June 8, 1995. The bottom line is that this bill increases the accountability of both levels of government. It fulfils this eight-month dialogue we've had on how we can disentangle the process and make municipalities more efficient, to ensure that property taxes will go down, not up. At the same time, we are honouring our 30% income tax reduc-

tion and eliminating myriad other fees and taxes. This is about keeping promises.

**Mr Bradley:** I enjoyed the member's speech. I think he was moderate, I think he was considerate, I think he made certain concessions where there would be some consensus in the province. But I should tell him that you can't concede anything to these people because they don't concede anything back. There's ideology and that's it with some members of the government caucus. If you concede anything, you're agreeing with what they say and they think you're agreeing with everything. And here you were trying to be fair and reasonable, particularly for the people watching.

You were quite correct in assuming, whether intended or not — I prefer to think not — that the result of this will be a further polarization economically of our society, where the wealthiest and most powerful people will be better off, even better off than they are today, and those of modest income and modest means will be worse off. In the short term perhaps you think you will have achieved something because you'll have reduced certain expenditures at the expense of those people, but ultimately the social problems will creep in.

When people are desperate, when people are so vulnerable, when people are so concerned, they undertake actions that they wouldn't normally undertake. Unlike perhaps the relatives of the member, they don't have the Tory connections, the rich-guy connections, don't belong to the Albany Club, so they can't go to the Albany Club and ask, "Would you hire my daughter?" or "Would you hire my son?" They're not part of that hierarchy. Therefore you're going to see those people fall into greater and greater despair while your smiles simply increase for the rich in this province.

**Mr Pouliot:** I too learned a great deal by listening intently to the discourse of the member for Dovercourt. Mr Silipo, the member for Dovercourt, is always balanced, always seeking equilibrium. He is focused and analytical to the point of being meticulous. The audience, the people of Ontario, will benefit from his balance, from his wisdom.

Most unfortunately, he was constantly interrupted, because the people across saw themselves under siege. He reminded them that if you take the credit, you also take the blame, that when the economy turns there will be a lot of vulnerable people, those who can't run as fast as the rich. He's right when he says it's the rich against us, that side against this side.

They're short \$2 billion to date, and it will only accelerate by virtue of the tax cut. They will stop at nothing to recoup the \$2 billion because they must satisfy the insatiable appetite of the well-to-do. So teachers, bang: "We'll pick your purse, we'll pick your pocket." Municipalities, you'll get the same fate.

They tell you it's a wash, that it's a break-even. Well, if the taxes go up in Manitouwadge and if they go up in more than 600 municipalities in Ontario, as they shall, it is not a wash. Nothing else matters. My taxes are going up, and they made it happen.

They say, "We know a lot about how market conditions work." There aren't two of them in the lot across the way who know that today, at the market close, the Standard and Poor's 500 price earning ratio is above 20 and the dividend yield is below \$3.

**Mr Galt:** It was interesting to listen to the member for Dovercourt. It was a rehash of many of his other speeches, fearmongering and trying to create emotional concern among constituents. I can understand, coming from the third party, why he would want to create that kind of feeling out there. But we have candidates like Mel Lastman and Bob Chiarelli out there campaigning, saying it's a wash and that they're not going to increase taxes, and I think that's laudable on the part of those particular candidates.

You talk a lot about taxes and where they're going. I point out to you some of the taxes we've reduced: the business registration tax, for example, the employer health tax, the income tax, all savings for constituents. And we're still increasing our total revenues coming in.

I was a little confused when the member referred to some of the unemployment figures he was using, something about France being ideal with 13%. I just didn't follow the concern. When we took office, unemployment was 10.5%, and it's been falling. We're now down to 8.2%. Since March, we've been creating some 1,000 net jobs a day in Ontario. That's the kind of thing we've been doing. Across Canada, Ontario has been creating some 56% of those jobs.

He referred to consulting and concern about consulting. I don't know how much more consulting you could do than the David Crombie study. We brought in all kinds of municipal people. There was a thorough study carried out and we accepted most of their recommendations. Then we moved to AMO and the transition team, looking at that, and AMO came back to us with another recommendation. We listened and we responded. That's the kind of government you have today: one that listens, responds and consults.

**The Acting Speaker:** The member for Dovercourt has two minutes to respond.

**Mr Silipo:** I'll be happy to report back to the member for Northumberland on future trips to France this coming year and let him know about further developments in what's going on there. I was not in any way, as I'm sure he understands, defending the state of the world there, or any other parts of the world, for that matter. I was simply pointing out that there are different ways in which governments can go about creating jobs. I, for one, happen to agree that the actions being taken by the current government in France are going to result in those jobs being created. I don't see the actions of this government resulting in the creation of the jobs that they say are the ultimate point of all this.

Mr Speaker, I remember and I'm sure you remember the story of the person on social assistance who after the election said that the reason she voted for Mike Harris was because she thought workfare meant she was going to get a job. It took some people longer than others, but we

discovered eventually that the workfare program, which was at the heart of the rhetoric the government put together during the election, was nowhere near the direction they were going to be implementing; that is, it's not through workfare that they're creating the move of people off social assistance.

Similarly, it's not going to be through the income tax cut that they're going to create the jobs. If the economy continues to pick up, as we all wish it to, then yes, jobs will be created. The government will not be able to point to the reduction in taxes as the cause for that. Undoubtedly they'll be able to take some credit, as they should, for some of the job creation, but they will also have to take the responsibility for the increases in taxes that this bill and all the other related bills will result in. That's going to be the sheer reality too.

2040

**The Acting Speaker:** Further debate?

**Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke-Rexdale):** It's very interesting to join in this monologue among three solitudes and it's very interesting to listen to some of the remarks from the previous speaker, the member for Dovercourt. In previous debates on economic subjects we have been condemned for ever proposing a tax reduction to stimulate the economy, yet on the other hand, we have the member for Dovercourt possibly using that significant tax reduction from his own salary as a stimulation for his nice vacation to France. It seems to me this mythology that still prevails around here, that tax reductions are for the wealthy and there is no money available for those at the lower income, clearly, if you look at the statistics, it's the reverse. In point of fact, one of the things that the opposition members constantly forget is the employer health tax that was instituted to replace the job killer we had before from the previous regimes.

I want to set the record straight. When we look at the whole subject of economic change and you look at the models around you, the member for Dovercourt quotes a very interesting example with France. Of the European Community, France has probably got one of the highest tax rates, one of the deepest structural unemployment challenges facing the common market countries, because they have got entrenched in their social system vacations of six and eight weeks for people who have been working for 15, 20, 30 years. Who wouldn't love to have such a system in place?

The side effect that is bringing forth is deep unemployment among young people. The member recites that this government hasn't been able to meet the challenges of dealing with the youth unemployment problem. If that's true with us, it's also true federally, because it's the federal initiatives that are supposed to be leading us out of youth unemployment.

I want to concentrate this evening on some of the general themes we've heard from members opposite regarding Bill 152, the Services Improvement Act. The general line or mantra that is taken is that you have two choices in this world in terms of dealing with these changes, what I would prefer to call the realignment of responsibilities,

which many members of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario over the years have been asking for, either isolated examples or complete changeovers, so that they could do the job better. If you went back over many agendas and not just the new reality agenda which they had two weeks ago, you would see numerous requests for service realignment responsibilities by rural, intermediate, suburban and urban municipalities. There was that general theme when I was on council in Etobicoke: Let us get on with doing the job; yes, give us some base money so we can do the job better, but we can deliver the service.

The common theme you hear from members opposite is that in the new world of the Services Improvement Act, you've got two stark choices, and they are these: You either raise taxes or you cut services. Those are the bipolar extremes that members opposite talk about. They have nothing in between. There's not the conception of a possibility that you could do something better between those two stark choices. To me, it's a syndrome locking folks in on the other side. They can't break out of that envelope to see that there are other choices for keeping your taxes under control.

I'm surprised by some of the members opposite who have served in local government, that they don't themselves talk about their own experiences in terms of how you can increase or improve services, at the same time reducing or balancing your taxes. All you have to do is cite the many examples throughout local government in Ontario.

We could start, for example, with the city of Etobicoke. There is the example of public-private partnerships. I know the members opposite don't want to hear about some of these imaginative examples, some that work out well, some that do not, because they're stuck in this syndrome that there are only two ways of dealing with the Services Improvement Act, with the realignment of responsibilities: increases taxes or cut services. There is nothing in between.

Here is an example of a private-public partnership between the city of Etobicoke and a private placement agency in terms of providing better services at lower cost through the Olympium. In this particular example, the city of Etobicoke is going to earn itself over \$1.5 million annually out of that partnership by allowing the private sector to build the facility for sports medicine. Members opposite would say, "No, you can't do that. The only way you could do that is to have the city or the municipality build the facility and increase taxes," because that's their first addiction when they're locked into this syndrome.

Addiction, that's what it is; that's what we're dealing with here. It's an addiction to tax increases, because when they were governing, that's the only way they handled the problem. There's a problem, so what do we do? Whether it's child poverty, whether it's changes in the correctional system, whatever it has to be, you just increase taxes and take in that amount from the private sector and spend it for the service.

The problem with that is that countless times, after they did this — the Liberals' 65 tax increases, a large number

by the more recent regime — was the problem resolved? Was there a solution to the problem? Was child poverty ended? No. Did more moneys going for correctional services reduce the number of breakouts? No. Were people on parole more successful? Not necessarily. But their refrain constantly is, "You have to increase taxes." There is no other way of handling the new world, the new reality that even their municipal cousins, when they came to AMO, recognized. Maybe they didn't centre and concentrate on the new reality, but it certainly is evident in their broad-based thinking, contrary to what you get from the members of the official and third party opposition.

Where does this take us in terms of other examples in dealing with both no tax increases and maintaining services in a reasonably priced, affordable way? There is another solution. Many cities have gone to outsourcing their garbage collection. Imagine: outsourcing their garbage collection. That's another way.

A third way, and this is from the city of Windsor — perhaps the member for Windsor-Sandwich would like, if she were here, to take a look at this example. I was surprised she didn't use it in her own remarks as an example of effective management at the city level in Windsor. What happened there is that there was a bid put out for winter road maintenance. Guess what? An in-house competition resulted in the city of Windsor saving \$250,000 a year.

But if you look for that type of innovative, imaginative example from that economically booming city, what you get from the member for Windsor-Sandwich is that the only way you can deal with the new realities in Ontario is increase taxes. It's like the addict: "I've got to have another shot, a shot in the arm of a tax increase, or I'm not going to get through the night. Or if I can't have a tax increase, there is another way," — and it's really imaginative — "we'll have to reduce services. There's no other way of handling these challenges, or maybe we've got to do both." There's only that one prescription we've heard over and over and over: increase taxes or reduce services.

I'm surprised that members opposite, who come from a variety and background of experiences, wouldn't be able to come up with some good examples of how you can deal with these major challenges in today's Ontario at the local government level: entrepreneurial government. "Oh no, we couldn't do that. We've got to have lockstep procedures, process." No results. That's the type of government we probably would have from members opposite, were they running local government in Ontario: increase taxes, reduce services or have more bureaucrats; just spend more money to have more people.

2050

There's a problem: There's no other way out of any of this stuff. You can't think of public-private partnerships. They're illegal. You can't have innovative management in public housing. Oh, goodness gracious, no. We have the example of that when you look at the Services Improvement Act. There is the constant criticism that municipalities cannot ever deal with social housing, even when you put in over \$250 million over X years, as we're going to

do, that the municipalities will be able to deliver a better, well-managed, capitalized public property stock than we did at the provincial level

If you go back and look at the origins of public housing in Ontario, non-profit housing, it started in the community, whether it be a church, a legion or the local government itself. For people to use the refrain that you can't find effective ways of managing the challenge of realigning public housing or social housing or affordable housing is simply to give up before you even start.

For example, if the folks across the way wanted to criticize us for what they call the downloading, surely when they were in government, the NDP would have been the champions of this, which is a good example to me of how you manage your public housing stock better: involved the craft unions in a private-public partnership, as the international labourers' union in the United States has done, and used pension moneys of those members, approved by those members.

In another way there is an example of major public housing improvement in San Francisco and Buffalo, where the members, the folks who are living in those public housing units, were retrained to be carpenters, to be lathers, to get a skill, and consequently when they fixed up their own units they had greater pride of ownership in them, because they had done the work. You supply them with some of the capital, you give them training if they are interested. You can turn around public housing, not overnight but in three to five years.

The problem with public housing as it has been managed by the provincial governments, this one and others, is they have put money into public housing but they didn't manage to get real value out of how public housing stock was improved overall.

In my estimation, it is a complete blind acceptance to assume that some way or other local governments do not have the capacity, do not have the managerial competence to take on these challenges. They do. The problem is that we don't hear specific examples from across the other way, even in those ridings where the opposition members rule the day, because they have to assume the party mantra, which is increase taxes — "My goodness, we could never cut a tax. I'm an addict; I can't go off that. What am I going to do?" — or reduce services. There's no other way. Those are the only two stark choices.

I hope to God that in the new city of Toronto, when the new councillors are elected, when the new mayor comes to power next January, we will have a group of councillors who are not only accountable but believe in value for the tax dollars that are spent and will approach their responsibilities with some real imagination, looking at innovative ways of doing business in the new city of Toronto.

In my estimation, an amalgamated, unified city is going to require tremendous levels of imagination, tremendous levels of ingenuity.

**The Acting Speaker:** Member for Grey-Owen Sound, I'd ask you to remove whatever it is, the label.

**Mr Bill Murdoch (Grey-Owen Sound):** It's just a little note from Boss Hogg's helper and I thought maybe you should see it.

**The Acting Speaker:** I would ask you to remove it, please.

**Mr Hastings:** Speaker, does that mean I still have 10 seconds or whatever is left? Thank you.

I want to go back to the theme that we hope and pray that when the electorate goes to the polls, not in the new city of Toronto but in many of the new amalgamated rural areas of county government in Ontario, they will choose wisely, that they will choose politicians, local government people, who either have a lot of experience in containing tax challenges and/or new people who bring to the table a tremendous amount of imagination and innovation in working out all the problems and challenges a new amalgamated local government entity produces, that the people elected will choose good managers and will work with each other.

My major fear is that we will have candidates who will run on a motivation that, if elected, they will make very sure that things don't work out, so they can point to us in a year or so and say, "See, I told you so; this new city of Toronto, this new township, doesn't work, because we had to increase taxes; I had to get my addiction fix" — the only solution to the whole problem — or, "We had to do a service reduction; we had to do away with snowplow clearance on township roads for a month."

We see that in certain responses, very traditional, old-style-of-thinking responses, there's nothing between these polar extremes. I'm hopeful and prayerful that we will have people elected by an electorate who will look at the records of the people running in these new cities, in these municipal entities, who will cast a vote for innovation, experience and above all a little bit of imaginative cooperation, instead of what is constantly demonstrated across the way, that you have to have a tax hike, a tax addiction fix.

That isn't going to work out there any more, and the doom and gloom of the folks across the way, who can only predict that, "If you only kept things the way they are, everything would be okay" — if everything is okay according to their version of reality, then how come people in the public, people that my colleagues and myself talk to, say: "You're on the right track. Make some adjustments here, but get the job finished. Don't tolerate tax inequity, tax unfairness, as particularly the Liberal Party espouses"?

I find it absolutely incredible that the member for Scarborough-Agincourt stands up here constantly defending the assessment status quo in Metro Toronto, that everything is just hunky-dory and we shouldn't be making any changes at all to commercial assessment, to residential assessment, because the folks in the suburban municipalities are really happy campers, spending higher tax dollars with lower services in the current regime.

I know the members opposite don't want to hear some of my remarks because they don't want to be associated with the labels, the monikers "tax addicts," "service re-

ducers," the only two traditional responses. Then there is the usual rhetoric about the attack on the vulnerable, the disabled etc, when in fact what people really want today is a growth economy.

The changes proposed in the services improvement bill, the realignment of responsibilities that AMO politicians have been calling for, for the last 15 to 20 years — they are now getting their opportunity to meet these challenges. I'm a little disappointed with a few of them who unfortunately have picked up the mantra, have been seduced by the mantra of tax addiction, increases and reductions in service. No other way to handle problems. Just increase and hike taxes. Yet the same group stands across the way and accuses us of reducing taxes to stimulate the economy, particularly these critics who talk about reducing taxes —

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, member for Etobicoke-Rexdale. The member for St Catharines.

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker:** The member for Etobicoke-Rexdale, thank you. The member for St Catharines.

**2100**

**Mr Bradley:** I very much regret that because of the rule changes the member, on this very complicated and comprehensive bill, is confined to only 20 minutes. He just made the case tonight. I wanted to hear him give more, but there we are stuck with these new rules and the member is stuck with only 20 minutes on an extremely complex bill. I think you've made the case.

What you are going to see of course is that the property tax will increase. The difference between the property tax and the income tax is that the property tax does not take into an account an individual's ability to pay. The income tax does. That's the difference. So medium- and lower-income people are going to be hit hardest by property tax increases, while those who are getting the lion's share of the benefits from the income tax cut — that's the rich and the privileged — are going to be much better off.

I notice as well — the member didn't mention this in his speech; I hoped he would — that the government has now put forward a time allocation motion, a closure motion in effect, on the debate on the libraries bill, where you are taking money away from the libraries. The libraries, remember, are open to the entire public. Rich people can afford to purchase their own books, their own VCRs, their own tapes and so on, but modest-income people have access to the library. That's where you provide equality of opportunity.

I wanted to have something to say on that bill, even though my local library board, when they were consulting, invited only the Conservative members to meet with them instead of any of the other members from the Niagara Peninsula. I think that's an insult to members who are representing the area and I think it's unwise for them. The present they've got for doing this from the government, the effect the government members had, is that libraries are going to be very adversely impacted by all this legislation.

**Mr Pouliot:** With high respect to the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale, what a missed opportunity — fully 20 minutes of government time to address the people of

Ontario and to ease the pain, ease the anxiety, dispel some of the belief and the perception. Instead, the member chooses to grab a club where he could have used the full 20 minutes to talk about the key messages.

I want to share this with the member: What's this package all about? Simply put, it's about dumping on municipalities. That's what Bill 152 is about. It's about down-loading the cost of ambulance, people in need going from point A to point B to have access to care. But you hit them in the pocketbook. That's what you're doing.

What about housing? Whereas it is not always in the best of shape, they take \$476 million per year from the federal government for operating social housing. They pocket that money and they take the social housing units and they dump them on the municipalities. He calls this streamlining. He says, "We're giving you a chance to live, not a chance to die," and then he pretends to stab himself. I think he overdosed long ago, the first day he came to this place. This is not opium that you smoke with your eyes. The very opposite. He grabs a club and he accuses both official opposition parties of being parties of gloom and doom.

We would like to remind you, with respect, colleague, that we love it when things go well. Hardly anyone likes it better than I do when the economy is going full blast. I love it. Not that I benefit by it or from it, but I love it too because —

**The Acting Speaker:** The member for Niagara South.

**Mr Tim Hudak (Niagara South):** I am pleased to rise in support of the comments that I always enjoy from my partner, the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale, who I find speaks a lot like the average taxpayer that I hear from in my constituency and the average taxpayer who supported this party to form the government.

And an interesting approach that I hear from the taxpayer, how the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale pillories the local politicians or the opposition politicians, who throw up their arms at any sign of change and say it's automatically a tax increase. They're going to run on the basis of fighting the changes the province is making. "We're going to run and say no to social housing changes." Or the local politicians say, "We're going to run and say that the province must fund 5% of libraries," instead of allowing 100% local funding.

But I'd say to those politicians and to the opposition members across the floor: "That dog don't hunt. It barks, it squeaks, it whines, it howls, but that dog don't hunt." Local taxpayers, local electors want to see politicians working together to end the finger-pointing as to whether it's a provincial service or a municipal service, sending them from door to door or from desk to desk. They want an end to the runaround and to find out very clearly who's responsible for delivering a service and what politicians they should go to, to make sure that service is a quality service.

I'll give you an example. When you put social housing at the local level for administration and funding, when you coordinate that with Ontario Works at the local administration and coordinate that with public health, that affects

a lot of the same taxpayers in Ontario. You break down the silo mentality where you point from desk to desk to desk and nobody gets help from all three sectors. They can all work together at the local level to make sure those who are in need, those who are vulnerable, get quality services that will help them move up the social ladder and make it a better province.

**Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming):** The previous speaker, the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale, I guess really under the new rules had to sort of amaze and wow all of us here because he's in prime time now under the new Tory rules. He had 20 minutes, but he's up against Larry King and some of the prime time shows. He certainly amazed me and I think he amazed many of the good people out there, the citizens who wish to put their names forward to run as municipal reeves and mayors and councillors right across this province. To accuse them of purposely sabotaging their own municipalities, municipalities where they live and raise their families and work, I think is an absolutely astounding accusation to make for people who give themselves to public service.

I think you'll find that whatever you give them, all the offloading challenges you're going to give them, the men and women out there who will be victorious in those municipal elections will do their very best to work, I'm sure they will, for their towns and their townships. I think that's a real insult and I hope you would reconsider your remarks.

It's interesting to note that I understand on August 23 there were a whole number of Tory municipal candidates who were right here at Queen's Park getting the word, getting some training on how to handle the election. Make sure you don't point your finger at Mike Harris and that Harris government for all the downloading. That would be verboten. So make sure you don't do that. They've got their marching orders and they've gone out now right across the province and they're going to be running in all those areas.

But there are other good people who are also going to be running and I think you have to give them the benefit of the doubt that they'll do the very best job they can under the very trying and challenging circumstances that you have set for municipalities right across this province. I hope they can be successful. I hope they can try to stay the line and not raise the taxes as much as I think they're going to have to, with all the Harris government downloading.

**Mr Hastings:** I thank the member for their remarks, some supportive, some still back in the tax addict context. But what would one expect?

I'd simply like to point out a couple of things. I recall that the member for Scarborough-Agincourt campaigned a few years ago on reforming the property tax system, the assessment system — listen to this, folks — to a market value assessment system, which he has subsequently many times condemned in this House, if you go back and look at his position in that election of 1990. I just want it to be on the record.

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**Mr Bradley:** What does this have to do with anything?

**Mr Hastings:** In this House anybody can speak about anything. The member for St Catharines is practised at being able to speak about anything the previous speaker never even referenced. I'm simply following in his good footsteps in that degree, although he has been here a few more years than I. I hope I don't have that habit become an alarming one and a repetitive one.

I simply wanted to conclude by pointing out that the new Services Improvement Act will bring about a sort of new light on the hill, a new vision for cities. It was a vision of the new city on the hill first raised by St Augustine. I think the new city of Toronto has that potential. I would like to add a quotation that I hope does not come true made by Richard I: "Lord, I pray thee to suffer me not to see thy holy city since I cannot deliver it from the hands of thy enemies."

I would conclude that what we have —

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, member for Etobicoke-Rexdale.

**Mr Colle:** It's very difficult to follow those quotes from St Augustine and — was it Henry IV or VIII?

**Mr Hastings:** Richard I.

**Mr Colle:** Richard I, excuse me. It's very difficult to match those quotes. I certainly commend the member for doing that research and adding some intellectual depth to his presentation with those quotes from those monuments of intellectual debate.

In terms of this bill, the interesting thing is that it is part of another 40 bills this government has introduced. Of the total of 80 they've introduced over the last two years, 40 deal with restructuring cities and towns and local government. Almost half the agenda of this government has dealt with revolutionizing, reshaping local government. Who would have believed, if you looked back to the Common Sense Revolution and the campaign of 1995, that this was the government you were electing to spend half its time revolutionizing city government or town government or county government? That's what they've done.

I can't recall too many people on the hustings in 1995 saying, "You've got to do something about my local government; you've got to do something about my local school board." People were saying they wanted jobs; people were saying they wanted good health care; people were saying they wanted safety on their streets. Those were the basic issues.

Where this, you might say, monumental urge to get into people's faces at the local government level came from certainly is a mystery to most of us on this other side, because it wasn't a big part of the Common Sense Revolution. If you look through the book — and I think most of the copies have been confiscated now. I had one on my desk and it's gone also — there is very little about local government in there. There is a lot about many other aspects, about job creation, about labour relations, but half of the legislative load this government has put before this House and the people of Ontario deals with municipal

restructuring. It's unprecedented. This bill is a continuation of that emphasis on reshaping municipal government.

These changes are quite dramatic; there's no debating that. You have to give the government credit for being very dramatic in the changes it is bringing about. The changes are very comprehensive because they will affect every county, every township, every city, every regional government throughout Ontario like they have never been affected before. They will affect how they tax, how much they tax; they will affect the services that are delivered, who delivers them; and all this will be in place in a very short period of time. They've essentially reshaped and realigned municipal responsibilities and provincial responsibilities in a very short time frame. The window is to open January 1, 1998, and things are going to happen fast and furious.

Local taxpayers are saying: "What will this do to my taxes? What will it do to my services? What will it do to my community? Will this be to the benefit of those local services, to my tax levels and to the city and town and community I live in?" With this shift there are a lot more questions than answers.

As you know, when this started there was that mega-week or mega-downloading announcement that took place within that week in January, I think — one after another. Nobody knew where some of these ideas even came from. I know this idea, for instance, about putting social housing, affordable housing, whatever you want to call it, housing the province had, on the property taxpayer is quite revolutionary. There isn't one jurisdiction in the world that has downloaded that has put social housing on to the local property tax bill. There isn't one. The government has failed to produce one study that shows it should do this.

Even the commissioner of the Crombie Who Does What panel said, in relation to this shifting of housing on to the property tax, "David Crombie has reacted very strongly against the government's move, calling it 'just wrong and coming out of the blue.' He states that the move was done on the back of an envelope, without discussions, without any input from anyone."

Probably the most dramatic shift in the downloading is going to be this housing. Nobody during the 1995 election was saying, "You should put social housing on to the local property tax bill." Nobody asked for that. The elected officials or the provincial candidates, even the platforms of the three parties — I don't think there was one platform that said, "Put the cost and administration of social housing on to the local tax base."

That's unprecedented, because traditionally social housing is paid for by the federal government and the provincial government, with a little bit of support in certain isolated areas from the local municipalities. For instance, you have Cityhome in the city of Toronto, you have the Metro Housing Co, which are quite unique. But generally speaking, social housing is considered an income maintenance program that can't be on the property tax. As we all know, the property tax is limited. The property tax has no correlation with one's ability to pay. Therefore, you could have a person who has been out of

work for two or three years having to pay this added burden along with a person who might have an income that is growing. That's why traditionally Canadians, and especially Ontarians, have shifted those types of programs away from the property tax and put them on income maintenance programs or income tax. That was the way we always went and what people accept internationally as the way to provide for social housing.

You may ask, why do we do it? In essence, it's a very complex program, because you're not only dealing with buildings; you're dealing with families, seniors, children who live in this affordable social housing. You can't just provide the bricks and the mortar; you need support programs for social housing to work. That is why municipalities have been very reluctant to take this on. They know that once you put up a building, you can't expect the building to take care of the people by itself. You have to put in support programs, outreach programs; you have to put in the soft infrastructure to make it work. That is why municipalities have never gotten into it. Now this government is saying: "Municipalities, you should try this. We think it's good for you."

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I think this is a very dangerous download. It's probably the most dangerous of all the downloads. For instance, it is anticipated that it will cost about \$360 million to upgrade the units we have here in Metropolitan Toronto alone. The province has only allocated approximately \$270 million for the whole province. Metropolitan Toronto alone needs \$360 million to fix up and to renovate the units they have already on hand. Many of them are older; they've reached that 30-year range where they need significant retrofitting. That's why the dollars are so large, and that is why it's very dangerous for municipalities to take this load on.

As you know, municipal governments and property taxpayers go through cycles. In the 1980s, those of us who sat on local councils know, tax revenues were coming in; assessments were growing. We were able to deal with growing demands and therefore we were able to keep a relatively high level of service and a relative lid on taxes. But as the recession hit in the late 1980s, near the 1990s, it was a whole new ball game. You could not find money to provide for the services. You had a hard time dealing with the reality.

For instance, in Metropolitan Toronto there was an explosion of the welfare rolls as unemployment swept across southern Ontario. Metropolitan Toronto came almost to the point of declaring bankruptcy because of the impact of welfare. They had to have the support, the cap of the provincial government which allowed for the provincial government to kick in money at a certain point. If that hadn't happened, if it wasn't for provincial protection, Metropolitan Toronto would have been forced to make massive cuts to all their programs.

That's why municipalities go through cycles. Things may be on the upswing right now. As you know, the Dow Jones went up 260 points yesterday, the TSE is doing well, there is a bit of economic activity, things are looking good. Things might be copacetic for the next two or three

years, and so maybe we'll be able to pay for those through our property taxes, but what happens five or seven or eight years down the road when there's another recessionary cycle? Hopefully there won't be, but if there is and then there's an influx of people who can't afford housing, who have to go into social housing or may have to go on to social assistance, what happens to those local property taxes?

That is why traditionally the provincial government and other provincial governments across Canada have protected local property taxpayers by spreading the pain through the income tax and asking for help that way. But this is a complete revolutionary approach which does the opposite of that trend. It puts social housing on to local property taxes. It's quite unusual, again unprecedented, and quite, as I said, dangerous because of the cycles.

Another interesting part of this bill is that it's also part of the downloading of the cost of public transit on to the local property taxpayers. In the Metropolitan Toronto area, not only will the TTC now be completely funded by local property taxpayers in the fare box; GO Transit also will be funded by the property taxpayers in the cities of the GTA and the 4.3 million people who live there.

At first blush, that doesn't look like too much of a problem, especially when, let's say, things seem to be pretty optimistic in a fiscal sense. The concern, though, is that with projects and undertakings like GO Transit, the future may demand massive investments of infrastructure to expand GO Transit. As you know, if you drive on the QEW parking lot and you go out to the Niagara region, you can see that we've almost come to gridlock; you can't get into or out of the Niagara region almost. Whether it's 3 in the morning or 2 in the afternoon, there's constant gridlock because there are in essence too many cars and not enough road space.

So you're going to have to invest more money in GO Transit lines; you're going to have to have better services. What that will mean is there will be another demand on local property taxpayers to help pay for expanded GO Transit and local bus services, because I don't see anything in the works, unless we build another toll highway, which we may have to, to ease the burden in the GTA for this traffic gridlock.

It's everywhere. As you know, if you go towards Durham along the 401, if you go on the 400 at any time, it's the same gridlock. So we're basically stuck in this bumper-to-bumper traffic. It has to be relieved, and probably the way you'll relieve it, along with maybe some strategic road expansion, will be strategic investment in GO Transit across the GTA. You may have to build new GO lines that are for passengers on all the existing abandoned rail lines, the CN/CP lines that sit there that have been used for freight.

That's going to take massive investments of dollars, but since the province is not going to be helping, that massive investment is going to have to be made on the backs of local property taxpayers. That is going to be a very expensive proposition. As you know, GO Transit has been supported. More than half its revenues come from taxes

already. The fares will not pay for it by themselves, or else they'll be a disincentive for people to ride, so you have to invest in GO Transit.

As we look to the future in the GTA, as we look to the future in Ontario, we're going to have to spend more money. We're going to have to invest more money in public transportation in order to improve everything from the gridlock problems to air quality. As you know, even your own Minister of Environment has finally done something and is going to have some testing of automobiles, because air quality is deteriorating. You know why it's deteriorating? As the economy has improved, we see a lot more commercial activity, vibrancy, on our roads, but that also brings more congestion, more exhaust fumes. That's why we're going to have to invest seriously in the GTA, especially down in southern Ontario, in more public transportation, as we do in roads. These costs now will no longer be on the provincial income tax. They're going to come down to the local property taxpayer. The question will be, can the local property taxpayers take care of the housing burden, and will they be able to take care of the new transportation demands?

There will be ongoing regular demands like garbage pickup, disposal, recreational services. There are also some new responsibilities. Health will now be local; ambulance services will be local. But these are very expensive services, especially those that get on the soft service side.

Certainly there has been a removal of 50% of the property tax off the tax bill, but as you know, that's going to be replaced by these other programs that are now on the tax. So the question is, will these shifts mean you are going to have communities, big and small, that are going to be able to provide those services, expand some services, try some innovative ideas, without being choked in the straitjacket where they're going to have to have money available to meet emergencies? That is the fear that most municipalities have, because at any time, as you know, there could be a major infrastructure emergency, whether it be major water lines or sewage projects. It could be

anything of that nature. They come up. Along with social emergencies, whether they're the result of unemployment or the result of a need to house people, those will come up.

This downloading restricts that manoeuvrability. I think the manoeuvrability has to be there because of the change in conditions. What we see in 1997 will not necessarily be what we'll see in — I guess we go to the year 2005, for instance. Where will we be? That is the unpredictability of the shifts we've seen. Very few people can really tell us that these are going to be totally bad or totally good. There are just too many uncertainties.

That is what we've witnessed over the last six months. We've gone through so many calculations, so many changes, so many task forces, so many interpretations. I guess the only thing we're going to have to remember is that the Premier has really come out and stuck his neck out. He has guaranteed that property taxes will not go up. Therefore, the Premier will either have to throw money at the programs to keep the taxes down or they will have to bail out the municipalities somehow. But the Premier was quite unequivocal that he and this government are inextricably linked to the property tax bill.

So the people all over Ontario for the next year or two or three — hopefully it's not three — every time they pick up their property tax bill will have to phone Mike Harris about the tax bill, because all this change has been perpetrated by his government. All these changes have been guaranteed to be revenue-neutral. He has guaranteed no tax increases despite these unprecedented, revolutionary changes. That tax bill will be Mike Harris's property tax bill, and if it goes up, they have to call him.

**The Acting Speaker:** Members of the assembly, I'd like to take a moment to thank the table for the guidance during my three weeks as a fill-in. I'd also like to thank Speaker Stockwell for affording me this opportunity and for your patience.

Now that it is 9:30 of the clock, or I would say 9:30 pm, this House stands adjourned until 10 of the clock or 10 am tomorrow, and the debate will continue tomorrow.

*The House adjourned at 2132.*

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Thursday 4 September 1997

Jeudi 4 septembre 1997



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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 4 September 1997

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 4 septembre 1997

*The House met at 1002.  
Prayers.*

### PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

#### TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

**Mr Bruce Smith (Middlesex):** I move that in the opinion of this House, as the government of Ontario has moved to realign provincial-municipal responsibilities, including transportation services, under Who Does What, the Ontario Ministry of Transportation should prepare a plan to support the development and implementation of an infrastructure strategy by investigating reinvestment options for bridge and structure development and replacement in this province.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley):** The member has 10 minutes to open the debate.

**Mr Smith:** It's a pleasure to have the opportunity to present this resolution and speak to the resolution this morning, and I look forward to the comments of all my colleagues in the House this morning.

In essence, the resolution calls for the preparation and development of a provincial infrastructure strategy that deals with, in particular, bridge and structure replacement in this province. I think it's important over the next 10 minutes to provide a brief context with respect to why I've brought this resolution forward and the potential we have if we're successful in moving it forward in this House.

Without any doubt the highway system in Ontario plays a great role in terms of economic benefit. A well-maintained highway system is crucial to Ontario's economic wellbeing and competitiveness, certainly the busiest parts of the Ontario road system in terms of competition with other major states and jurisdictions. The section of Highway 401 near the 400 essentially competes with parts of the Santa Monica Freeway in California, which represents one of the busiest sections of highway in North America.

It's one of the most rapidly growing areas of interest as highway traffic growth reaches 3% to 4% per year. About 90% of all intercity passenger travel takes place by automobiles on highways. This obviously has a significant economic impact whereby nearly 65% of all Ontario exports by value travel to the US by truck through our transportation system. We've come to expect the transportation system not only to represent and acknowledge

the importance of the economy in this province, but the wellbeing in the context that Ontarians have come to know, and want to ensure and see in terms of a safe travelling public and a well-maintained travelling surface.

As well, the context provides a provincial focus as we've gone through the Who Does What exercise, which I think is an extremely important exercise as we look to the exchange of responsibilities and areas of concentration as the province continues to prioritize its services and identify those services which benefit the province as a whole. There's a provincial focus and context that needs to remain very strong as we look to this issue. We've gone through an exercise that essentially sees the movement of some local transportation services to local control.

To provide a little bit more context in terms of ministry investment, total construction in the highway budget for 1997-98 is approximately \$562 million, which in fact is higher than any other previous year except for 1996-97 which will see a record year at \$628 million. On the issue at hand that I'm speaking of in terms of bridges and structures, capital expenditures on bridges alone and rehabilitation will reach approximately \$51 million in 1997-98, which is up from approximately \$34 million in 1996-97.

This is certainly a positive indicator of the government and the ministry recognizing the need and the benefit from maintaining a well-structured and well-maintained infrastructure, and at the same time there's a need to remain cognizant of the auditor's report and assessment that there still is opportunity for the ministry to continue its investment options in the highway system and bridge structures in this province to ensure the economic wellbeing I spoke of earlier.

This provides the context from which I'm bringing this discussion. I think the resolution itself, if successful this morning, will seek to secure a longer-term commitment to infrastructure redevelopment and investment. From my general observation, infrastructure reinvestment generally is met very positively in most communities as a much-needed thing.

From a maintenance perspective, it's been very evident throughout the course of the summer and into the spring that road construction is continuing. I know from time to time members in this House express that it's not continuing at the rate they would like, but none the less it's very evident as you travel across this province that there's a great deal of construction and rehabilitation taking place.

As well, we must realize that investment in rehabilitation in surfacing and bridges is an important investment,

and timely reinvestments can result in longer-term significant savings by avoiding high returns on costly and premature reconstruction activities. The ministry is undertaking, at least from my research, every effort to examine different life-cycle models of highway construction and maintenance, and through the investment opportunities I've identified, I believe those reinvestment strategies are being realized.

If, for example, you used a life-cycle model to examine the typical lane of highway in this province, we would find that rehabilitating the typical lane kilometre of Ontario highway is about \$410,000 per lane kilometre over 50 years. There's an interest that needs to be addressed here, and one that is very important.

1010

Albeit I don't wish to be extremely political, I think there's an opportunity to move ahead into the future with respect to this resolution. There has been concern that over the past 10 years the expenditures weren't sufficient enough, depending on the priorities of the government of the day, for us to maintain the system that we would anticipate through those time models.

I think there's opportunity to move to address the need for investment in bridge and structures, and bridges themselves are a very critical component of this. Bridges built since 1980 typically have a lifespan of some 72 years, and annual costs anticipated to avoid further deterioration, including bridges and lane construction, of some 3,200 provincial highway bridges is about \$94 million. There's a need, in my opinion, to look at timely rehabilitation opportunities so we can maximize on some of these investments we've already spent a great deal of money on.

The call of the resolution is to ensure that the ministry remains mindful of the need to develop a strategy that renews our infrastructure and protects the investments we've made to date. It's an opportunity to look ahead. It's a longer-term policy direction that I think is important, a resolution that's complementary to the work that the ministry has done to date and I believe envisions into the future. It's a resolution that essentially serves to recognize the benchmark we're at now in terms of the transition of services, a resolution that will take us beyond that benchmark into a more futuristic field of view.

The focus on reinvestment and the need for funds in safety and rehabilitation goes unquestioned in this House. On a regular basis we hear of the interests that members have in terms of ensuring that our infrastructure is in place, that the constituents they're representing are satisfied that the safety measures and standard of travelling services in this province meet their expectation.

I think the strategy also continues to emphasize greater effectiveness, assessments of how the provincial highway program is run, and obviously I would hope that any savings realized through the reduction of overheads incurred or realized in the highway traffic program are reinvested back into the highway system.

What do we want to achieve at the end of this? This is an opportunity to continue to identify and prioritize provincial interests, no matter which ministry it is, but par-

ticularly, with respect to this resolution, the Ministry of Transportation. It provides us an opportunity to continue to work with stakeholder groups such as the Ontario Good Roads Association, which, from my own experience, historically has had a very positive working relationship with the Ministry of Transportation in terms of exchanging ideas and expertise with respect to road construction and rehabilitation in the province.

The Association of Ontario Road Superintendents, who happen to have their headquarters located in my riding, recognize the need for us to maintain and remain focused on and committed to bridge and structure redevelopment in the province.

In conclusion, it's an opportunity through this resolution to build for the future, an opportunity to build on the ministry's efforts to date, an opportunity to strengthen Ontario's infrastructure. It's in that context that I'm asking for the members' support in passing this resolution this morning.

**Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew North):** I see that my friend from St Catharines is just arriving. Unfortunately, he's 10 seconds too late. He never gets an opportunity to speak in here, so we should give him our condolences.

I want to rise to support the resolution. It's rather like supporting the sunrise in the eastern sky. It doesn't really admit to any opposition. Really, we're asking the Ministry of Transportation to prepare studies. Well, now, that certainly would not come as a big surprise to anybody who pays taxes in Ontario.

I think the member rightly observes that the roads and bridge and structure development are important, critical, quite frankly, to a good transportation network. I fantasize, as someone who comes from the hardwood hills and pine valleys of eastern Ontario, what it must be like to represent an area like west Middlesex, Edenic in its agricultural appeal.

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** What does "Edenic" mean?

**Mr Conway:** Edenlike, as in garden of. I think of an electoral district where you have got some of the best, flattest, most fertile farm land, to which the Ontario government built the Henderson highway, otherwise known as Highway 402. I guess if you started with that and you were next door to Lambton, you would feel that you were highly advantaged by God.

Now, if you come from Renfrew and you've got thousands of acres of rugged pre-Cambrian rock, with very low population densities, which would be understandable given that terrain, you'd say to yourself, "Boy, if I were in Caradoc township or Mount Brydges or perhaps even over in St Thomas, I might just feel a little more encouraged by what these studies might reveal."

I want to be clear. I support the resolution. I don't think any thinking person could not support something quite this antiseptic. I want to say as well that the sponsor, as some of these revolutionaries do — I'm glad to see the former finance minister here, from Nickel Belt — these current government revolutionaries are wont to tell you that there was just nothing but an excess of spending in the last 10

years. It was just terrible. We spent too much money all the time on everything. But then when they get to individual line-item issues, there was never enough money spent.

In his wonderful southwestern Ontario manner of understatement, the previous speaker allowed as to how, "I don't want to be political, you know, but of course there could be made a good case that this resolution and the important studies that are going to be generated with its passage speaks to an underinvestment in the period from 1985 to 1995."

I will excuse that as a bit of sophomoric enthusiasm, but the reality is, you can't suck and blow all the time.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Conway:** I say to my good friend from Etobicoke, who has the most — actually, I don't want to get distracted.

**Mr Tom Froese (St Catharines-Brock):** Take the high road.

**Mr Conway:** Tom, you're right: take the high road. There are a couple of trolls in here who would distract you ever and always to the low road, and I'll try to avoid them.

My point is that in a county like Renfrew, we've just been told that we're going to get 256 kilometres of provincial highway downloaded on to our backs. In the region of eastern Ontario, we've just been told we're going to get fully 50% of the provincial highway grid transferred down to us. The tax base, particularly in rural, small-town, eastern Ontario, is not what it is in Halton and in Lambton and certainly in Middlesex.

Why is that? There are lots of good reasons. One of the reasons is that the single biggest landowner is the provincial government. That's why. When you own 50% of the land base and pay precious few taxes, it does affect your financial situation.

I don't want to continue to beat an old horse here, but we're getting in the region of 50% of the provincial highway system downloaded to us. We're not getting one cent, apparently, of the \$2.5 billion worth of provincial fuel and gas taxes. We're not getting any of that, but we're getting half of the provincial highway system.

**Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton North):** Do you remember your remarks last night?

**Mr Conway:** I remember them well. But I'm just telling my friend from north Halton that we're getting 50% of the provincial highway system in eastern Ontario and in Renfrew county we're going to get 256 kilometres. The point I want to make is that we're going to get, under your initial plan, the bridge over the Madawaska River on Highway 62, or what has been Highway 62, at Combermere. We're going to get the bridge over the Madawaska River in the town of Arnprior. Those are multimillion-dollar structures that are going to be downloaded to local government. Those are just two; there are several more that I could enumerate. There is little or no tax base to support that kind of multimillion-dollar bridge and structure renewal that the member for Middlesex quite rightly observes is an extremely important part of our transportation network.

1020

Can you imagine in a county like Renfrew, with 95,000 people, with 3,000-some-odd square miles, nearly half of which is crown land, getting a mittful of bridges like that and the local taxpayers, whether they be in the hamlet of Combermere, the town of Arnprior, the city of Pembroke, the township of Hagarty and Richards, are supposed to pay for that? The answer is clearly, they can't, and the member for Lambton will know that. We would crush these local governments in my part of the province — and I see the member from north Simcoe is here. Some of this has got to be equally applicable to places like Oro township and Tiny township. I can't imagine that the financial capacity of some of those rural townships in north Simcoe is going to be sufficient to shoulder some of these burdens. I may be wrong, but I can tell you, in Renfrew it certainly will not be.

If, as and when that bridge over the Madawaska River at Arnprior has to be rebuilt, that is going to be a very substantial capital investment. My guess is, while it hasn't been announced, that one of the aspects of the Who Does What policy is going to be a capital fund provided by whatever government is in place here at Queen's Park to support particularly rural townships, counties and northern districts with those kinds of obligations, because they simply cannot be shouldered by local property taxes, I say, speaking from my part of eastern Ontario, and I would add to that counties like Haliburton, north Lanark, Lennox and Addington and a good bit of Hastings. There is just no way.

I support the resolution. I say that there are some opportunities, no question about it. Previous generations of MLAs have cut their teeth here and come back here after elections promising to build. Harry is not here. Too bad my friend Danford is not here, because I will personally write his political legacy, and it will be that Harry Danford finally built the new bridge over the Moira River at Tweed, and if for no other reason, he should be re-elected. But I want to be there in Tweed when Harry comes back to talk about the cost to the county of Hastings paying now for the full operational requirements of Highway 37. Harry may be sorry that he ever built the bridge over the Moira River, because when Harry was lobbying, he was fully expecting that the Ontario government would be maintaining Highway 37, as it should, in terms of our provincial highway system.

I have said enough, and I am happy to yield the floor.

**Mr Bill Vankoughnet (Frontenac-Addington):** Madam Speaker, on a point of order: I was listening with great interest to my colleague to the north, but I think it's only appropriate that he mention the member for Hastings-Peterborough rather than his name.

**Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt):** I say right off the top that I almost have to support this resolution because the member for Renfrew North indicated that all thinking people would be supporting this resolution. He puts me in a bit of a corner here, even if I didn't want to support it.

I do, of course, support the resolution, although when I first read it, I scratched my head, wondering where the

member for Middlesex was coming from and what he really wanted to get out of this resolution. At first, I think I read too much into it, because I thought it was some kind of attempt to have a reinvestment strategy in which somebody else would pay for it. I had in my mind a picture of a road and then a bridge, the road being a public road and then suddenly you get to a bridge and there's a light and a toll to cross the bridge on that highway. Then I thought, no, he can't be doing that, because Premier Harris promised no user fees would be imposed by his government.

But I don't disagree with the argument that there needs to be a reinvestment strategy for our bridges, indeed our highways, in the province. I can recall about five years ago being in New York City and seeing bridges closed, simply closed and no access to them, because they were unsafe. They hadn't fixed them up. Can you imagine the cost of that to the economic system in a place like New York City, where traffic is already bad enough? Then you start closing bridges and of course it makes it even worse.

I did find it a bit strange that the member for Middlesex would be critical of the previous two governments for not spending enough money on bridges and roads. I can recall day after day in this Legislature his colleagues, Mr Harris leading the gang, demanding that we not spend so much money, that we were spending way too much.

**Mr Peter L. Preston (Brant-Haldimand):** On the wrong things.

**Mr Laughren:** On the wrong things, of course. Oh, of course. You only wanted it spent where you wanted it spent, on your particular projects. I see. Well, that isn't what Mr Harris said.

**Mr Conway:** I always liked Mike's line about North Bay. He wanted to get his share of your waste.

**Mr Laughren:** That's right. He wanted part of the waste for North Bay, on his terms.

I can recall keeping track at my desk on that side when members of the Tory party would stand up and demand something for their ridings. I would write it down. I would write down the date, the member and what it was they had asked for, and every now and again when the current Premier was in one of his unseemly rants in this place, I would remind him of what some of his colleagues were demanding from the system. Of course he shrugged that off and went on, as he appropriately did, I guess, to form a massive majority government in this province.

But I simply say I worry about what happens in communities, as the member for Renfrew North said, when this downloading occurs, because I represent a constituency not totally unlike that of the member for Renfrew North, which is very rural, very isolated. My constituency runs almost 400 miles north and south and almost 100 miles east and west, and you can drive 100 miles without seeing any population whatsoever.

**Mr Preston:** Moose.

**Mr Laughren:** You could see a few moose, yes.

Lots of reinvestment needs to go on there. I can recall, in the dying days of our government, making a pledge, along with the Minister of Northern Development and the Minister of Transportation, to build a road between High-

way 144, which goes up from Sudbury to Timmins, across to a community called Sultan, about 40 miles south of Chapleau, which is a community of about 3,000 souls. We had set the money aside in the budget. That road was going to be built. It cuts off roughly 100 miles of road between Sudbury and Chapleau, which is the centre for a lot of what goes on in Chapleau.

One of the first things the government did when they came into office was cancel that project. I don't know whether they cancelled it because the previous government had made the announcement or because they didn't have any members up in that area and didn't care or whether they felt that their money would be better spent in southern Ontario. I guess it's the latter. So I don't need any lectures from members of this government, even if they are mild-mannered and polite, as the member for Middlesex is. I don't need a lecture from him or any other Tory about lack of investment in our roads and bridges in this province, because what this government has done for Highway 69, for example, which runs north between Barrie and Sudbury, is disgraceful. The two previous governments had set out a program four-laning so many miles a year because that whole transportation corridor desperately needs a four-lane link. I know, as someone who has driven that highway for many, many years.

1030

**Mr Frank Sheehan (Lincoln):** Travel the rest of the highways. They are a disgrace but we are improving them big time.

**Mr Laughren:** I'm being heckled from the Tory rump. As a matter of fact, from the very centre of the Tory rump.

When I think of how the Tory government has ground to a halt — they're going through some public relations activities on the four-laning with announcements and environmental studies and so forth, but basically the four-laning of that highway has ground to a halt, and that's an important link. I don't want to put too fine a spin on it, but would anyone deny that the four-laning of Highway 401 across southern Ontario has been a massive economic stimulus to the province? It has been huge. I believe the day will come when that will be done between southern Ontario and northern Ontario, and that's important.

Just this summer I drove from Sudbury to Saskatoon. I can tell you that the link of the Trans-Canada between Thunder Bay and the Manitoba border is in need of a lot of reinvestment, as the member for Kenora would tell you as well. I must say the Kenora bypass is wonderful, but you don't see Kenora — and I'm not saying that's why it's wonderful.

**Mr Conway:** Leo Bernier and Lorne Henderson did more in government than you and I could ever think of doing.

**Mr Laughren:** That's correct, because that is a true bypass around Kenora, which was desperately needed. I can recall trying to get through Kenora at the wrong time of day and it was a task indeed.

I would say to members that I believe there is still a lot to be done with improving the transportation corridors in this province, and reinvestment strategy should be part of

that. I've always believed that the federal government should be taking a role in helping us fund the Trans-Canada Highway. I believe we should have a four-lane Trans-Canada Highway right across this province, indeed across this land, because I think it's terribly important. I appreciate the fact that driving and building highways on the Prairies is a lot different than building a highway in northern Ontario. It's just two different worlds. But at the same time, I believe that if we're going to be a country that wants to attract tourism and people driving across this land, then I think we need to put investment into our highway system.

All it would take — and I can remember floating this with people from other provinces in the last five or seven years — would be dedicating one or two cents per litre from the gasoline, existing taxes if you like, to a fund which the federal government would control and then four-lane the rest of the Trans-Canada Highway. For those parts that are already four lanes, fine, you don't use the dedicated tax for that province. In Saskatchewan, most of the Trans-Canada is four-lane and there are already plans under way to do more of it there.

I will simply conclude by saying I will support the member for Middlesex in his resolution because I believe there needs to be an investment strategy to protect and reinvest in our bridges and in our entire highway system. I wish him well as he tries to convince the bureaucrats and the minister that this is indeed the correct path.

**The Acting Speaker:** Further debate?

**Mr Froese:** I appreciate the opportunity to be able to speak to the resolution presented by my colleague the member for Middlesex. We became friends —

**Mr Conway:** Is it prepared text?

**Mr Froese:** It is prepared text, you're absolutely right, member from Renfrew.

We became friends shortly after we were both elected to this House and took office in June 1995 and were appointed together as parliamentary assistants to the Minister of Education and Training. During all this time I've gotten to know the member very well, and without a doubt he is certainly a visionary in his thinking and, when dealing with issues, thinks matters through very thoroughly. He is able to look at matters objectively, at both sides of the issue, and come up with creative, fair and logical solutions. This resolution is an example of that type of visionary and fair thinking, thinking that came out of his own experience in his former life, before he got here, as the chief planner for the city of London. In short, when it comes to planning, he certainly knows what he's talking about.

My understanding of his resolution is that it consists of recommendations for the post-Who Does What Ontario. The province would be in a position to develop an implementation strategy for bridge and structure development that could be used as a model for municipalities. This plan or model would be geared to those highways within provincial jurisdiction, such as the Queen E or the 400-series highways.

The Ontario government receives about \$3 billion a year from provincial gasoline and fuel taxes and driver and vehicle registration fees. These revenues flow into the consolidated revenue fund from which all government programs are financed. Governments both past and present spend a great deal of revenue on Ontario roads. However, the present government has spent and budgeted an unprecedented amount of money towards our transportation infrastructure programs and services. For example, in 1987, the provincial government at that time spent approximately \$283 million on highway capital construction projects. In 1992, the provincial government spent \$460 million on the same type of projects. However, when you compare it to when our government took office, we spent \$629 million in 1996, and \$562 million will be spent by the end of this year.

There are those who suggest, and the member for Nickel Belt had suggested as well, that all or part of revenues received from motorists should be spent on roads. In my opinion, that wouldn't be a very good plan because there are many indirect expenditures that occur related to our highways and bridges. For example, there is policing, emergency response, health care and court system expenses that must be paid. There are also transportation-related operating and capital costs for both the Ministry of Transportation and the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines, such as road safety and seniors' licensing programs. I know about these programs at first hand because I've used an MTO consultant on a number of occasions to speak to seniors at my community seniors' seminars.

There is also a role for the federal government in planning an infrastructure strategy for bridge and structure development and replacement. They too can become leaders in this planning process. For example, the federal government collects about \$2 billion a year from Ontario motorists through gasoline and fuel tax and related GST but returns very little to Ontario for reinvestment. The only examples of federal funding reinvestment are the 1987 to 1999 strategic highway improvement programs, which allocate only about \$60 million over that period of time, as well as the 1995 agreement for \$42.3 million for the Highway 416 construction.

The federal government also contributes to the Canada-Ontario infrastructure program extension for 1997 to 1999. The dollar amount is \$24.5 million towards provincial highways. But clearly that's a very small investment considering how much Ontario contributes in taxes.

The bottom line is that the member for Middlesex has put forward a resolution that recognizes the province as a leader in developing and planning for the future of Ontario roads. He suggests a forward-thinking, multi-year plan which, used by the province for the highways left within its jurisdiction following the Who Does What initiative, can be a model for all Ontario municipalities. I commend the member for his vision and insight.

1040

**Mr Bradley:** I'm absolutely delighted the member is able to put forward such a resolution because unfortunately the government muzzled him on something in which

he has a good deal of expertise, and that is the Planning Act. I was looking forward to his comments during the consideration of the Planning Act, because as my friend from St Catharines-Brock mentioned, he has some considerable expertise in the field of planning. I was happy to see that we have this opportunity where the muzzle can be taken off a member and he can put forward, I think, a positive resolution, because I'll be certainly supporting that resolution.

What we have to consider is that the provincial government has given a present to the municipalities. It's not as though they haven't given the municipalities anything. They said: "Guess what? We've got a present for you. We've got all these roads and you can have jurisdiction over them. Oh and by the way, you can have the bill to maintain those roads and to improve those roads as well."

That is going to be a very significant onus on municipalities, particularly when we see that some of the roads are not really what you would classify as municipal roads. Once again we have something in the municipal mix which will be competing for the very limited dollars municipalities will have with all the downloading that is taking place from the provincial government.

Several new areas of responsibility are being forced on to municipalities, much to the embarrassment of many of the Conservatives who sit on municipal councils and who have to defend this downloading, week after week, and apologize for Mike Harris, rather than standing up for their own municipality. Right across Ontario, that's going to be embarrassing. This I hope will engender some new funds which will be able to assist in infrastructure.

One of the differences between many places in the United States and Canada is the infrastructure, one thing we can be proud of. When you travel into the United States, you notice that the general infrastructure isn't always as well-kept in their municipalities as it is here. I think that now we're seeing the opposite. We're seeing here a deterioration of the infrastructure. One of the things that attracts business to a particular municipality is that infrastructure. It's very visual, it's very tangible, it's often concrete. I think it's important to maintain that infrastructure.

Unfortunately, as I say, with all of the downloading, with the responsibility for social housing, there is a tremendous bill, hundreds of millions of dollars; with new health care obligations while hospitals are being closed by this government despite the Premier's solemn promise that, "Certainly, Robert, I can guarantee you it's not my plan to close hospitals" — that's what he said to Robert Fisher during the leaders' debate — they're putting further health obligations on municipalities that are experiencing the closing of hospitals in some cases.

What we're seeing now is the very unfortunate circumstance of the local political representatives having to either cut services further, when they've already made deep cuts to the services in their municipalities, or raise taxes or raise user fees, which of course place a greater onus on the people who are least able to pay.

An example I use in that regard, because all the infrastructure money has to compete with the money for social services, is I look at a situation, Canada's national sport of hockey, along with lacrosse; the two are considered to be our national sports. Every time the fees for the rental of the arena are raised by municipalities desperate for funds, then the registration fees are raised for the young people who want to play. That's no problem for the wealthy people. They can afford those fees, but unfortunately, those who come from families with a very modest income are unable to experience this.

The reason I raise that with the member is that I believe we need a strong infrastructure. I believe the provincial government, with the resources it has, should be in a better position to assist municipalities to maintain that infrastructure, because those municipalities are going to be hard-pressed, with all the downloading of new obligations and financial responsibilities from this government so it can meet its commitment on its own tax cut, and they're going to have a tough time dealing with this matter.

**Mr Len Wood (Cochrane North):** It's a pleasure for me as well to stand in my place and support a resolution of this kind brought forward by the member for Middlesex. It's quite clear he's very much concerned, as are a lot of people right across Ontario, that as you dump and download the responsibility for provincial highways on to the municipalities, the maintenance programs are not going to be maintained.

I can give you an example in my riding of the bridge going through Mattice. The NDP government had budgeted for this bridge to be rebuilt and repaired in 1995. When the Conservative government was elected in June 1995 they cancelled the money for that. They cancelled it again for 1996. Now, in 1997, they're going to go ahead and repair it because they know this is the only route going from east to west through northern Ontario. That's the only way you can get through there. There are no other bridges. If this bridge was allowed to deteriorate any more — the NDP government had recognized that and it put a schedule in place to do it.

There are a number of other cancellations that took place over the last couple of years that are really a concern to the municipalities in my riding. When we were in government we had budgeted for passing lanes and we installed them between Kapuskasing and Hearst. They were also budgeted for between Smooth Rock Falls and Fauquier. The paving program that was scheduled for 1995 was cancelled there. It was cancelled in 1996. Now they've repaved the road but they cancelled the passing lanes that were needed between Smooth Rock Falls and Fauquier.

There are all kinds of examples of cancellation and downloading and not spending the proper dollars that are needed to maintain the infrastructure system right across this province, whether it be in southern Ontario or whether it be in northern Ontario.

A few dollars are now being spent but at the same time they're cutting back on education, they're cutting back on health care, they're closing hospitals, they're cutting back

on the amount of money that's transferred to municipalities, at the same time dumping the responsibility for what used to be provincial roads and provincial bridges on to the municipalities.

There's a real concern out there as to how property taxpayers in northern Ontario — because we don't have the huge numbers of people living in northern Ontario that there are in southern Ontario. If you raise property taxes a very small amount you get more dollars than you do if you raise taxes in a community like Smooth Rock Falls, with a small population, or in Kapuskasing or in Hearst or in Mattice or some of these small communities.

They are already being hit hard because now, on January 1, they're going to have to start paying for OPP policing. The Conservative government that was in office for 42 years, up until 1985 when they were removed from office, said that municipalities with less than 5,000 population would not have to pay for policing. As a result, the municipalities did not budget money in their budgets for this. Now, all of a sudden, they're going to have to come up with between \$500 and \$700 per household just to make sure the communities are kept safe by paying for the OPP services.

It's a real slap in the face for a lot of the municipalities that don't know what to expect. We're getting into an election coming up in November. When we refer to this resolution, it's quite obvious that the Conservative members who are not in the cabinet are quite concerned there could be a deterioration of the infrastructure system, when Mike Harris is only concerned about giving a \$5-billion tax break to the wealthiest people in this province and could neglect the infrastructure system, as he is doing with health care, education and some of the other services that are just being palmed off on to the municipalities and no plan in place for how these services are going to be delivered and how the mayors and reeves are going to make up the money to pay for these services. It is a real concern up there in northern Ontario.

1050

**Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton):** It is a pleasure for me to stand in this House today to speak on the resolution of my colleague from Middlesex.

I keep hearing that this government is going too fast and too far. When it comes to roads, I don't think this government can go too far and too fast, especially when I hear the complaints on the other side of the House. I think, as my colleague from Middlesex pointed out, a well-maintained highway system is crucial for maintaining Ontario's economic competitiveness and social objectives.

I know it's difficult to follow my polished colleagues from Renfrew North and Nickel Belt, because they are wise and seasoned. However, I agree with the member for Nickel Belt when he mentions that all levels of government have a role to play in maintaining a sound mode of transportation, or as he pointed out, a transportation corridor. I think municipal governments play a role, provincial governments play a role and certainly the federal government has to play a role.

When I talk about a transportation corridor in my area of southwestern Ontario, Highway 402 is very important, especially because we have an initiative in Sarnia-Lambton that we call the NAFTA superhighway whereby we would like to link the economic activities from Mexico, the USA and Canada into one great transportation link. Not only will it benefit the economic activity of southwestern Ontario, but I am sure it would benefit the economic activity of the member for Nickel Belt and the member for Renfrew North.

I'm sure the member for Renfrew North is as concerned about the road conditions in Barry's Bay and Killaloe as I am with the road conditions in southwestern Ontario. However, when it comes to spending money upgrading of the road infrastructure in Ontario, I think this government has done a tremendous job, especially in the past two years. It is becoming a pleasure to leave Toronto and drive to my riding on newly upgraded roads. This year, this government will spend in total \$945 million on provincial highway construction. I think that is commendable, and we have to keep encouraging the Minister of Transportation, along with the staff in the ministry, to continue spending money on the upgrading.

While we are talking about the economic activity of the road transportation in Ontario, I know the member for Nickel Belt mentioned a toll road. We have a toll road at the end of Highway 402 in southwestern Ontario, the Blue Water Bridge, which was recently twinned. The economic activity that will be realized from the twinning of this bridge is tremendous, and I think we have to cross political borders when it comes to maintaining a sound highway superstructure in Ontario. Without the sound infrastructure in the highway structure, I am sure all the economic activity in Ontario will be impacted upon.

Yes, I am proud to be from southwestern Ontario. As I pointed out, we are the gateway not only to Ontario but to a large amount of economic activity in Canada. There's a lot of economic activity that crosses the Blue Water Bridge. Some upgrading has to be done on the present Highway 402. However, the Minister of Transportation was in the area in the past month and he has assured us that the gateway to Ontario and Canada will be upgraded.

In closing, I would like to continue encouraging the member for Middlesex to pressure the ministry to continue to spend money on the infrastructure in Ontario.

**Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls):** There are a lot of things I'd like to talk about, but I only have about a minute and I will give some time to the parliamentary assistant. The member for Cochrane North talked about a lot of cancellations and rescheduling of projects and promises the previous government had made for new bridges and passing lanes and so on. When we came into office there were hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars of promises on the books, and at the same time the Provincial Auditor had issued a report saying that 60% of our existing highways were in terrible shape. We could not possibly keep all the promises the previous government had made, or we would continue to run \$11-billion deficits. At the same time, we had to reprioritize the spending to up-

grade those highways that the Provincial Auditor said were such a mess. We have done that, as the previous member said, all over the province, including in the St Catharines-Niagara area, where the highways are much better.

We are improving ramps, I know, in my area. We are looking for creative solutions, creative ways to finance. Our caucus transportation committee has pushed for, and now we have in place, highway landscape advertising which will help in beautification. I think the MTO has been very creative, very entrepreneurial. I will support this resolution because it encourages us to continue on those paths.

**Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke-Rexdale):** I'd like to reiterate briefly some of the points that were raised in this resolution and to compliment the member for Middlesex for raising the strategic significance of putting good dollar bills back into infrastructure. I think the key here is that we have done so within a context of fiscal restraint, and that is not easy to do today. We came to government facing a huge debt and deficit, yet at the same time we have raised sufficient moneys for highway infrastructure, bridges and tunnels over the last two years.

To be specific, we have increased the amount of expenditure, within a fiscal restraint context, on bridges from \$34 million up to \$51 million. The member for Cochrane North is dead wrong when he says, "Oh, nothing is happening." In fact, a great deal is happening, because we have started with the principle that an infrastructure of highways that is adequately built and well maintained is key to our economic competitiveness, and we are doing that across the whole province, not only in northern Ontario but in southwestern Ontario, in eastern Ontario. I was just there the other day and saw a major piece of highway from Maynooth down to Madoc being completed.

The key to getting more money into the whole system is the role the federal government needs to take on. This province and its taxpayers pay a tremendous amount of money into the gasoline tax, yet when we look back at all the efforts of Minister Palladini — and we are going to concentrate more and more in this area, in the area of trying to get the federal government to commit itself to more than \$24.5 million under the Canada-Ontario infrastructure program and place it into the strategic national highways plan that we require for this whole country when we are trying to reduce interprovincial trade barriers and make this economy a smooth, seamless economic system for the benefit of all taxpayers.

That's why I'd like to compliment the member for Middlesex for bringing this to our attention. We will direct even more effort to it than we have in the past.

1100

**The Acting Speaker:** Further debate? Seeing none, Mr Smith, you have two minutes to wrap up.

**Mr Smith:** My thanks to all the members who spoke in support of the resolution this morning. I would just say at the outset that the resolution is not about securing a portion of the waste, as we heard referenced here earlier. I know it is typical to reflect on some historical comments

that have been made, and perhaps I fell prey to that this morning as well. But it is more about looking to the future and developing a strategy that recognizes the importance of infrastructure development in this province.

The member for Nickel Belt raised a very important point. I don't want to misdirect what the intent of his comment was, but I believe he himself was recognizing the need for strategy and the opportunities to link that to national investment and strategies in our infrastructure. The member for Lambton and the parliamentary assistant alluded to that same issue and the need to address that particular opportunity.

As I said at the outset, bridge rehabilitation and infrastructure development in this province are critical to our economic wellbeing. They are certainly critical to the safety factors that many Ontarians believe, and rightfully so, they should enjoy as the travelling public, and they serve us very well in terms of the strength of our economy in the longer term.

I think as well we need to recognize — and it's not just myself; it's the auditor's observation — that the opportunity does exist to reinvest more money in highways and infrastructure on an ongoing basis to ensure that the longer-term costs of reinvestment are not excessive.

I would say in conclusion, again, my thanks to all the members who spoke to this resolution this morning. I very much appreciate their comments.

#### CONDITIONAL SENTENCING

**Mr Peter L. Preston (Brant-Haldimand):** I move that, in the opinion of this House, since the federal government increased the threat to community safety through the introduction of conditional sentencing in September 1996, which has been referred to as "judge-ordered parole," and which allows criminal offenders to serve their sentences at large in the community and not incarcerated in a correctional facility, the federal government should be urged to recognize the increasing concerns expressed by the people of Ontario for their public safety; and

Recognizing the concerns of the public for their safety and the ensuing compromise of public confidence in the justice system, the federal government should revoke these provisions allowing convicted offenders to remain in Ontario communities while serving their sentences; and

Where the federal government refuses to revoke these provisions, they should at the very minimum agree to limit the use of conditional sentencing provisions to minor property offences;

Therefore, the government of Ontario should urge the federal government to act on the concerns of the Ontario public in order to ensure our communities are properly protected and to ensure public safety is not compromised.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley):** Mr Preston has moved ballot item number 94. Mr Preston, you have 10 minutes.

**Mr Preston:** On September 3 of last year, Mr Allan Rock, the former federal Minister of Justice in the Liberal government, introduced a new provision to the Criminal

Code of Canada permitting the use of conditional sentencing by our courts.

I'm not against conditional sentencing. I believe it will mitigate the overcrowding of our jails. I believe there are some cases in which it's proper.

I'll quote from a Toronto Sun editorial of March 25, 1997, page 10: "Parliament is sending a clear message that the courts are to be more imaginative in structuring sentences that are less restrictive of liberty of the person sentenced. We are instructed to canvass all available sanctions other than imprisonment where they are reasonable in the circumstances." I think this is germane: "reasonable in the circumstances."

The reason for my resolution is to draw attention to where judges have been flagrant in their disregard of the essence of this bill: minor offences, first offences. I have some examples later that will show there has been a complete disregard.

Essentially, conditional sentencing allows a convicted criminal to serve his sentence in his own home or in the home of another, with prescribed times of being in the home, only to be allowed to go to work and for medical and public service. It's a good solution for first-time minor offences, and this is important to remember. With this provision, the judge has what is called "judge-ordered parole." The Liberals did this while at the same time getting tough on crime, or at least talking about it.

Since the introduction a year ago, some very high-profile cases have become test cases for the new provision. I'm sorry to say that our justice system is failing in these tests, and consequently failing the victims of crime.

A woman was convicted of manslaughter in the shooting death of a common-law husband. I believe she was being abused, but there are times when a woman has to call the police. We do not take another's life. She got a conditional sentence: two years less a day, not one day in jail for the taking of a life and being convicted of manslaughter. Is that minor? It may be a first offence but it certainly is not minor.

Our government introduced a Victims' Bill of Rights in this Legislature because we recognized that the justice system was in need of reform. The balance between the rights of criminals and the victims' need for justice has been tipped heavily in favour of the criminals. A sentence must be a deterrent. An old quote: "Justice not only should be done but must be seen to be done." Our system has forgotten the public, especially those who have been victimized by crime. They demand and indeed deserve retribution.

This is part and parcel of the penalty stage of any crime. We have left the idea that the punishment fit the crime: armed robbery, \$250,000 in a faked robbery, rape, loss of trust.

In the case of the \$250,000 faked robbery, there was a conditional sentence of 15 months. In most cases of sentencing there is what is called a PDR, or pre-disposition report. The pre-disposition report is a home look-up, a look-up on the person's character. Nobody found out that this gentleman lived in the States, so he was confined to

his home for 15 months. He immediately crossed the border and went to his home, where we have absolutely no jurisdiction. There is something lacking. The judge didn't read the PDR, the PDR wasn't put together, or the PDR was put together improperly, because if you do a look-up on a person and can't determine that he has dual citizenship and that he's going to the States to serve his sentence, there is something lacking.

Again, I'm in favour of conditional sentencing, but it has to be done under certain circumstances and they must be minor crimes, first offences.

A violation of a victim's rights should in turn lead to a revoking of at least some of the criminal's rights. Being sentenced to go home for 15 months and watch TV is not going to do anything for the victim's rights. Traditionally it has meant loss of liberty and incarceration, and I believe it should continue for people who have serious crimes and are repeat offenders. I don't believe it should be done in the case of first-time minor offences.

The people in my riding of Brant-Haldimand and indeed citizens across Ontario demand safe communities. They want to know that criminals are off our streets and unable to further endanger our children and the elderly. They want to know that those who are found guilty of serious crimes are put in jail.

A trucker is convicted of drunk driving. His next conviction is for drunk driving causing a fatality. While he's awaiting sentencing, he gets convicted of drunk driving again. He gets a conditional sentence. A continuous offender; a conditional sentence.

I'm asking that the judiciary use some common sense in the sentencing of conditional sentences. They must be for minor offences. They cannot be for repeat offences. We must show that there is a deterrent to crime, continuous crime. We must show that justice is done. I therefore ask the members to look upon this resolution with favour.

1110

**Ms Annamarie Castrilli (Downsview):** I welcome this opportunity to discuss the resolution that has been put forward by the member for Brant-Haldimand. It may interest members of the House to know that it marks the second attempt by Conservatives to shift the blame for what's happening in the justice system to the federal government through a private member's resolution. The first time it occurred was when the member for Dufferin-Peel made a resolution on section 754 of the Criminal Code with regard to the faint hope clause.

One has to ask, why are they spending energy on matters which are outside their jurisdiction? One really has to ask, why not look at the justice system as it exists in Ontario, at the chaos that has been created in Ontario by this government and why not introduce a resolution or, better still, a private member's bill to fix the problems you've created? That really should be the question today, not to deal with arguments that have little to do with this Legislature and which shift away the attention from the very real problems.

Of course it's convenient to use rhetorical camouflage and to point fingers at somebody else, but the record here

in Ontario speaks for itself. I would like to have seen something a little more in keeping with what the solutions must be for a province such as Ontario.

We all agree on one thing. All three parties surely want the security of the individual in Ontario. I cannot imagine any one of us who does not believe that is a priority, that our citizens have a right to live freely and safely in their homes, on their streets, in their businesses. On that we are agreed. I guess what we need to look at is precisely how we can further that goal, how we can make that a reality for people here in Ontario.

Many members of the government caucus, as many of us will remember, including the member for Scarborough West, favour the broken-window approach to crime, which suggests that small crime problems should be dealt with quickly before they evolve into larger ones. That's a laudable goal, a very good goal, may I say to the member for Scarborough West. In fact, the members for London South and Durham Centre and Scarborough West were appointed by the Premier to go to New York to investigate the broken-window approach's results at first hand. There had been some dramatic turnaround in New York and it was something that perhaps we might have learned from.

Well, a May 22, 1997, article in the London Free Press quotes Metro Toronto Police Chief David Boothby as saying that the broken-window approach would require 1,000 more police officers. In other words, it would require more resources. Guess what? The broken-window approach does not seem to be the goal any longer. The Conservatives loudly proclaim their zeal in defending law and order and then proceed to slash the very funding which makes this possible. There is a persistent lack of planning and forethought about where the justice system should go and how to get there. Instead, what we have is a government that staggers from crisis to crisis, and the facts are clear.

If you look at the specifics, the first thing is that the Tories have slashed about \$116 million from the budget of the Attorney General in this last year alone. In the East Mall court, one of many courts in Ontario, there are 14,000 cases backlogged. The Ministry of the Solicitor General has been cut by \$16 million since the Tories took power. We currently have approximately 400 crown attorneys in this province who are responsible for dealing with 250,000 cases. We have come perilously close, time after time, to having dangerous offenders thrown out on the street because we do not have the resources to prosecute them, not the crown attorneys, not the courts. That's a very dangerous situation.

I have stood in this House time after time to talk about alleged rapists, alleged thieves, people accused of assaults of the worst kind, having their cases thrown out of court because we did not have the resources to process them and their cases simply stayed in the system too long. That's a very serious situation. The Attorney General has stood up time after time announcing yet another blitz, but the blitzes don't seem to do very much good. What you really need is a commitment to justice every day of the year, not

just once in a while when the situation grows to critical proportions.

Look at the family support plan. Look at the disasters you created there, where husbands and fathers are paying into the plan and that money is not getting out to children, creating chaos in those people's lives. Never have we had governments that have been so quick to act without planning. It's been acknowledged by anyone who has looked at the plan that it was done too hastily, that it was done without planning. For heaven's sake, you set up a system and didn't even tender the computers for it until some four or five months after you closed the regional offices. That's the kind of disaster we see in the justice system every day.

Legal aid is another area where tremendous difficulty has been created for people who legitimately need the assistance of legal aid to go to court. Remember, justice is not just for the rich, justice is for everyone, and not everyone can afford big bucks and big lawyers.

A study of the legal aid by Osgoode Hall law professors Frederick Zemans and Patrick Monaghan points out that the system is totally out of control. I'd just quote from that report, if I may: "Even though the province is spending over \$175 million on legal aid in the current fiscal year, there are too many Ontarians who deserve and are entitled to legal assistance who are not receiving it." Those who are not receiving it are the ones who can least afford not to have that assistance. They're the ones who can least afford to look after themselves.

We've also seen, in the current year, unprecedented action by the chief justices of this province who through letters and comments have indicated what a mess the justice system is in. Justices Dubin, McMurtry and Linden wrote to the Attorney General in January 1996 and used the word "chaotic" to describe the potential implication of this government's cuts. They wrote again and they commented again this year to indicate that the situation is not any better; in fact, the situation is much worse.

One has to wonder, given the contradiction between the get-tough approach of this government and the slashing of resources to back up this philosophy, how this government is going to cope with the extra prison population that would inevitably result from the passage of this resolution.

I just want to make one other comment on the member's statements with respect to victims' legislation as one of the wonderful things they've done. Again we can agree in this House, I hope, that it is important to respect the rights of victims, and I think the general thrust of legislation that furthers the rights of victims is all well and good. In fact, you may recall that my very first act in this Legislature was to bring in a private member's bill on just that, on victims' rights. The subsequent bill that was proposed by the government and passed watered down the rights for victims. That legislation is not mandatory; it's at best permissive. There's no real requirement to involve victims at every stage, but there's a suggestion that the system should certainly do that.

You've put in some 1-800 numbers for victims, but that in itself is not enough. People need to be involved in the system and people need to have the confidence that this

government every day of the year is committed to a justice system for all Ontarians. No one here wants to give criminals additional rights. No one here, I think, would condone a system that would allow criminals to walk free.

1120

My point is that there are so many things here in Ontario that require fixing — from victims' rights, from the backlog in the courts, from legal aid, family support — that require the urgent attention of this government, why are we focusing on conditional sentencing, which is outside the sphere or jurisdiction of this House?

I hear the member for Brant-Haldimand and his frustration about some of the apparent injustices of the conditional sentencing. They're frustrations that I imagine would be felt by many people, because the conditional sentencing provisions of the act are not intended for violent offenders; they're intended for the less serious crimes. They're intended for crimes where, if a sentence were to be imposed, it would be for two years less a day. If you look back at the history of that particular section, it's not new; it goes back to at least the 1960s. It was intended to rehabilitate as quickly as possible people who were not violent offenders and to eliminate some of the high incarceration rates in the federal system.

There are statutory requirements which must be satisfied before a court can apply such a sentence. I'm a little disturbed to hear that there is this prevalent view that somehow this type of sentencing would be applied to the most serious offences. In fact, that is not the case. If that is happening, I suggest there is some other way to deal with it, that perhaps one ought to look at some other avenues to deal with that.

But certainly it is for lesser offences. It is intended to make the system work better. It is intended to eliminate the exposure of people who have committed very light crimes, in comparison to the larger prison population, from being exposed to the hardened life of a criminal in our prisons and therefore perpetuating a system and introducing them to a harder life of crime. Surely that's not what we want. We don't want individuals who may have made their first mistake, young people who may have made an error, to suddenly be exposed to hardened criminals and be introduced to a much more critical life which would be much more injurious to society as a whole than dealing with it in the first instance — the broken-window approach that the member for Scarborough West is so fond of.

My concern is that your government has created a vicious circle, that we're not dealing with the real problems. When you cut junior kindergarten, you are doing much more than just cutting junior kindergarten. For every dollar you spend in junior kindergarten there are \$7 you save in social services and prison costs. For every child who goes hungry because they're not getting money from the family support plan, that again is a cost to society. For every individual who doesn't get the rehabilitation they need, that exacerbates the problem. For every individual who is sent to what is now the dismal failure of boot camps, there are going to be additional

costs to society. It's a spiralling scenario you've created. What you should be doing, quite frankly, is looking at the very serious issues that affect real people and dealing with those, and not tilting at windmills, trying to blame someone else.

I know this resolution is grounded in good faith. I hope that in good faith you will also look at the problems you have created and try and deal with them responsibly, remembering always that the function of government is to provide for equality and the freedom and security of the individual.

**Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre):** I'm pleased to have an opportunity to speak to the resolution brought forward by Mr Preston today. I must say I'm delighted to hear him protesting that he is supportive of conditional sentencing, because that certainly isn't what the resolution says. The resolution says in the first instance that if we pass this resolution, this House will be asking the federal government first and foremost to do away with conditional sentencing. Then he goes on to say that if they won't do that, minor property offences should be the only ones that are concerned.

That makes it difficult to be supportive of this resolution. If the resolution talked about conditional sentencing being an effective deterrent in some crimes that are not violent crimes, that are not against persons, and if this resolution talked about the ways in which the Ontario government within its jurisdiction could support that, it would be much easier for us to be wholeheartedly approving.

Let me say right off that in the time I was Attorney General, when all the attorneys general across the country were discussing the changes to the Criminal Code and were discussing the issue of conditional sentencing, Ontario was making very strong representations that conditional sentencing should not apply when crimes are against persons. All crimes against persons are not necessarily violent crimes in the same way. There are many levels of sexual assault and regular assault. There's simple assault, there's assault with a weapon, aggravated assault. They all are differing levels. Generally speaking, there are three categories for criminal offences. Unfortunately, the first category has included within it some of those more or less — I'm putting this in quotation marks — "minor" crimes against persons.

My suggestion always was that conditional sentencing ought not to apply to crimes against persons. We know that 25% of those who are incarcerated in this country are incarcerated because of non-payment of fines, number one. Also, the categories — shoplifting was mentioned by the member — of shoplifting, uttering a forged document, theft under \$1,000, damage under \$1,000, mischief, trespass, and all sorts of other crimes, may indeed be appropriate.

The whole issue of conditional sentencing came out of the desire expressed strongly by judges and by those working in the criminal justice system that our system have more flexibility to try and mete the punishment to the crime, to try and keep those who had committed crimes

connected to their community, keep them out of an incarceration situation where they would come in contact with others who are more hardened criminals, and to try and give to judges the flexibility and the range of sentencing that was most appropriate. That was the intention.

I must confess that we have to keep in mind that Canada is second only to the United States in terms of its rate of incarceration. Particularly with this pressure from this government to try and make more and more offences subject to jail time, there needs to be some way to deal with the numbers of people whom we have incarcerated and made unproductive in our system. Conditional sentencing is potentially a very good way to deal with those who have not committed crimes against persons, whose offences are offences that need a clear sanction, whose behaviour needs to be clearly controlled in some way so that further harm won't come of it, but who are also in a situation where they are required to be contributing citizens. That is the purpose behind conditional sentencing.

1130

The member is quite right that there are many instances where we read in the paper that a judge has given a conditional sentence in an inappropriate way. I find it unfortunate that the member chose a situation where the offender happened to be a woman, when we know that women are far less likely to be offenders in the system and where the situation was as he described, because there are many examples of sexual assaults, of wife assaults, of murders that have occurred and for some inexplicable reason — the member is quite right — a conditional sentence is applied. This appears to me to be a very strange situation.

The member speculated about why that might be so. He talked about a pre-disposition report. I would say to the member, pre-disposition reports are written by probation and parole officers who work for the Ontario government. Do they have the time to do appropriate reports when the kinds of cutbacks that have happened in that area are making it more and more difficult for people to do their work appropriately and to supervise appropriately?

He talked about people breaking conditions in their conditional release and not being prosecuted for that. Why? Talk to any probation officer about what the case-load is because of the budget restrictions of the Ontario government and ask those probation officers how they can give the kind of supervision they need to give.

Has the Attorney General of Ontario issued a directive to crown attorneys around, first of all, plea bargaining and conditional sentencing, that they must not plea-bargain for conditional sentencing when it's a crime against persons? Has the Attorney General made a general directive in the crown policy manual that says it is inappropriate for a crown attorney ever to agree to, on a guilty plea, or to advocate at a sentencing hearing, for a conditional sentence when the crime has been against persons? I'd be delighted to hear it, but I don't believe that's the case. I've been in too many cases where in fact that isn't the case and we see the plea bargain situation, in particular, resulting in conditional sentences where they shouldn't be there.

Let me give you an example of a young and vulnerable constituent of mine who came to me last February in great distress. The person who had sexually assaulted her, raped her, had reached a plea bargain with the crown. The person was released on a conditional sentence, on the condition that he not have any contact with her, that he not frequent the places they had frequented together, that he remain a certain distance from her, that he not contact her, all sorts of conditions.

She came to me, first of all, because she didn't think it was appropriate in that kind of a case that there should be a conditional sentence at all. She felt that was inappropriate and she felt it was inappropriate for the crown to have supported that.

She also came because she was running into this person all the time, in her neighbourhood and in the places she had gone. She had gone to the probation officer and the probation officer, an Ontario employee under the jurisdiction of this government, told her there was nothing they could do, that it costs too much to go after every little breach, and suggested to her that she should avoid going into the stores or the restaurants or the places where this person might bump into her. That's not respect for victims' rights and that's under the control of this government.

I told her what the complaint process was. She carried through with that complaint process, talked to the supervisor of the probation officer and has said very clearly that it's her goal in life to expose this issue of conditional sentencing where there are crimes against persons. I am happy to be able to tell her story today because that will help her to continue to fight against the injustice to her as a victim of this particular kind of sentencing.

But I would say to Mr Preston very directly: It is not appropriate when so much within the enforcement and the prosecution of offences comes under the jurisdiction of your government to try to shift the blame to the federal government. What you will hear back is a whole lot of questioning about what is going on in Ontario. What is going on in Ontario that is giving rise to this phenomenon here? Do we know whether it's more prevalent in Ontario for judges to be opting for conditional sentencing? I don't have those statistics, but I'm sure the Attorney General does.

I think it would be appropriate for this member to be lobbying his Attorney General and his Solicitor General around the enforcement, prosecution and then the supervision of those who have been given conditional sentences.

The argument of the federal government, the argument quite frankly of the judiciary, around restricting the use of conditional sentences to any one category of crime has always been that it is not appropriate to restrict the discretion of a judge on sentencing. It rings a little hollow because we know of course we do that in very serious cases. We know there are minimum sentences that can be given for many offences and we know there are categories of offences for which one can't apply for parole or probation until after a certain time.

It was an argument that always struck me as very bizarre because of course judges are there, first of all, to be fact-finders in the facts that are brought before them in the court of law to make a determination based on those facts of the guilt or innocence of the individual, and then to use discretion concerning the mitigating circumstances or the aggravating circumstances of the crime as to what the appropriate punishment is within the limits that are set for that crime within the Criminal Code.

It seems to me it would be quite reasonable if we were to pass a resolution that would go something like this: Given that we support the availability of conditional sentencing for judges in cases which are of a minor nature, which do not involve crimes against persons and where there has not been a history of repeated offences, given that we support it in that circumstance, we would ask for a limitation on that from the federal government to those kinds of crimes. That would be a reasonable thing.

But it should add a requirement that this House call upon the Attorney General and the Solicitor General in their roles in enforcement and prosecution and supervision in the justice system; that they be active players in this whole issue of conditional sentencing; that crown attorneys have clear policy around which they must use their influence within the court in asking for sentencing or in making decisions about plea bargains; that the probation and parole staff of the Ministry of the Solicitor General be given the resources, the training and the availability of sanctions that make conditional sentences really work, because they won't work without that kind of supervision; and that we clearly start as a community to stop the rhetoric about throwing everyone in jail and throwing away the key and start the discussion, a very clear discussion, of how we stop the revolving door syndrome in our prisons, how we really deal with rehabilitating those who are able to change their behaviour so that when they come back into our communities — and we must remember that they will come back into our communities in the vast majority of cases — they have the tools with which to support themselves and their families.

The conditions themselves, since the whole idea is that people be able to work and support themselves and their families, should include things like, if someone owes family support, that they be ordered as a condition of a conditional sentence to pay family support and that that be throughout the system in terms of release from jail and so on. That's one way we could actually make a positive out of keeping people at work and maintaining their families. It would make it a reality, and it isn't now.

1140

**Mr Jim Flaherty (Durham Centre):** First of all, I compliment the member for Brant-Haldimand on bringing this important issue before this House for debate. The resolution speaks to fundamental concerns of this government, that of the security of our community and the safety of our citizens and that offenders are held accountable for their crimes.

Conditional sentencing was introduced by the federal government in September 1996. It allows the judge the

option of ordering community service sentencing in cases where the judge is satisfied that the offender would not pose any danger to members of the public. In fact, the federal government believes that in some cases this may be the best way of dealing with certain offences. Some are calling the use of conditional sentencing a form of judge-ordered parole. This government agrees in principle that some offenders can be best dealt with by community sentencing.

However, this government is committed to ensuring the integrity of the justice system and restoring public confidence in the administration of justice. Public confidence in the justice system must not be compromised. The public has responded angrily to conditional sentences imposed on people who have committed serious offences. There is no shortage of media attention to what appear to be unreasonable sentences for serious crimes. People have the right to, and are demanding, safer communities. Governments must provide this through appropriate and responsible government policy.

At present, under the changes made by the federal government, those convicted of serious crimes may be considered for conditional sentences, something this government finds totally unacceptable. We believe, except in minor cases, that convicted criminals should be receiving jail sentences and should not remain in Ontario communities while serving those sentences.

If the federal government refuses to revoke these provisions, they should, at the very minimum, agree to limit the use of conditional sentencing provisions to minor offences. We will be urging the new federal justice minister to review the provisions of the Criminal Code with respect to conditional sentencing. We want her to either revoke or amend these provisions to limit conditional sentences to minor property offences.

We are concerned about reducing crime to make our communities safer. As the member for Downsview noted, we do have the crime control commission, of which I am a member along with the members for London South and Scarborough West, and we have embarked on a consultation process. We want to listen to people to hear from them what they are experiencing in their communities and what needs to be done to make their communities safer.

That consultation process has already involved public meetings in Chatham-Kent during the month of July; in Barrie last week; next week in Etobicoke; subsequently in Scarborough; in Peterborough; in my riding of Durham Centre, in Whitby, on September 30 at 7 pm at St Bernard Catholic School on Dryden Boulevard; and elsewhere in the province. Those are important public consultations, because these are issues which affect people seriously in their daily lives.

I listened with interest to the comments from the member for London Centre, who seeks to place limits on what is minor and what is serious. I would say this, that in the public consultations to date, what we are hearing quite clearly is that if you are living alone and your apartment is broken into, that's serious to you; if you're being stalked, that's serious to you; if you're being threatened, that's

serious to you; if your car is broken into, that's serious to you; if your business is broken into; if your privacy in your home is violated by home invasion, that's serious to you — without violence to the person, but it is a violation of the privacy and sanctity of the home. That's serious, the people in the province are telling us, when one talks about what are serious and what are minor offences.

I listened also with interest to the member for Downsview, who defends the faint hope clause, who says section 745 is not something we should talk about — forgetting that the provinces in this country constitutionally are responsible for paying for the administration of justice, that when Olson goes in the courts of British Columbia and takes two weeks of the court's time and the crown attorney's time and the time of the judge running that court, that is money paid by the taxpayers of British Columbia.

Similarly, the member for Downsview defends conditional sentencing and I suppose will defend the tragedy that is the current Young Offenders Act. We're hearing a great deal in our public consultations about how that act just doesn't work, not only from the police but from people in the community and from probation officers. There seems to be a clear consensus that that piece of legislation does not function to curb youth crime and make our communities safer in Ontario.

There is more I'd like to say on the subject, of course, but my colleagues also wish to speak to this important resolution brought before this House by the member for Brant-Haldimand, whom I compliment.

**Mr Jim Brown (Scarborough West):** I am pleased to be able to speak on my colleague's resolution to ask the federal government to eliminate conditional sentencing.

Federal Justice Minister Allan Rock introduced conditional sentencing in September 1996. It slipped through as one of a series of amendments to the Canadian Criminal Code and went almost unnoticed — that is, until the repercussions of this ill-conceived piece of legislation began to be felt.

Conditional sentencing gives judges the option of sending offenders back into the community for house arrest rather than going to prison. It was designed to keep people the judges feel are not a danger to society from going to prison and costing the system.

Criminal offences are serious offences. Offences of a less serious nature are called summary and usually are punishable by a fine. Serious offences should mean real punishment.

Since the introduction of conditional sentencing, there have been some frightening miscarriages of justice.

An Ontario man who threatened to kill his estranged wife was given a conditional sentence. He was allowed to live at home. This was his sentence.

A BC man admitted to sexually assaulting an 11-year-old victim once a week for three years, and he avoided jail. He never saw the inside of a prison, thanks to conditional sentencing.

A Grande Prairie man shot at his wife with a sawed-off rifle and received a conditional sentence. He walked the streets while on house arrest.

In British Columbia, a man who confessed to raping and sodomizing a 38-year-old screaming woman with a racquetball racquet was exempted from a two-year jail term. Yes, a conditional sentence.

Taxpayers are fed up with namby-pamby, limp-wristed sentencing. House arrest or conditional sentencing is a sham.

The federal Liberals have made the streets unsafe. For those who say our jails are too full, I submit that the federal government has filled them by refusing to make video remands mandatory. Some 90% of those being held in the Metro West Detention Centre are there on remands awaiting trial or, in many cases, yet another remand. The tremendous cost of incarcerating and transporting these people, many of whom are innocent, ties up police, costs a fortune, fills the courts and packs the detention centres. I urge the federal Liberals to mandate video remands.

Having a consistent system of sentencing for those who break the law does not fill up our jails; rather, it empties them. If someone does the crime, they should do the time. It has been proven that when so-called minor criminal offences are pursued diligently, both major and minor crime rates drop dramatically. The broken-window theory, well documented, is no-nonsense and it works. Zero tolerance: Crime declines and the prison population drops. It has been working in New York City for the past five years with no extra policing, no extra bodies on the police force. The prison population in New York declined from 22,000 to 17,000 and crime across the board over three years declined almost 50%.

The message of justice in this country must be clear and uniform. That message has to be that if you refuse to live by the laws, you will be punished. But sadly, that's exactly the opposite message than the federal government is giving to those who choose to break the law. Again and again the public has told the federal Liberals that they want the government to get tough on crime, to punish offenders and to protect public safety and victims' rights, and time and time again, the voice of the public has fallen on deaf ears, as our federal lawmakers ignore the public outcry.

It's tragic enough that the federal government refuses to scrap the Young Offenders Act, fails to repeal the faint hope clause for dangerous offenders and fails victims. I ask all my colleagues in the House to support the member for Brant-Haldimand and tell the federal government that conditional sentencing or house arrest does not represent the wishes of our constituents. We need to tell Ottawa that the people of Ontario want to see our lawmakers tackle crime, not back away from it.

We're fed up. We won't take it any more. If they do the crime, they should do the time.

1150

**Mr Gary L. Leadston (Kitchener-Wilmot):** I'm pleased to support the member for Brant-Haldimand's resolution concerning conditional sentencing. I agree that

public safety could be at risk by allowing people who commit violent crimes back into the community. The federal government must reconsider its change to the Criminal Code of Canada from last September that allows an offender to serve a sentence of less than two years in the community as long as that person is not considered a threat to public safety.

The following cases are prime examples of why this law should and must be changed: A 20-year-old male convicted of molesting an eight-year-old child was sentenced to a 12-month conditional sentence in his own home. A man convicted of sexual assault was sentenced to 16 months in a relative's home. A man sexually assaulted an 11-year-old babysitter and was sentenced to 15 months in the same community. A man and woman who stole \$250,000 were handed a conditional sentence of 15 months of house arrest. These are just a few examples of the improper use of conditional sentencing.

I believe conditional sentencing should only be used for first-time, minor property offences, not child molesting, not rape, not sexual offences, certainly not sexual assault, or armed robbery. I would urge the members of this House to support this resolution to help send a very clear message to Ottawa to change the conditional sentencing law.

We represent the people of Ontario. Probably anyone in this room can cite an example of someone in their family, in their neighbourhood, in their community or a constituent who has been a victim. If it was up to the victims to decide, we would not have conditional sentencing.

**The Acting Speaker:** Mr Preston, you have two minutes to sum up.

**Mr Preston:** The member for Downsview asks the question, why would I get involved in something that's not in my jurisdiction? Because it has to be done. Because what is happening is wrong. It doesn't matter if it's in my backyard, my front yard or out of my jurisdiction. If it's wrong, it should be fixed.

I find myself in the curious position of agreeing almost 100% with the member for London Centre. There are problems today that we have not addressed that we should be addressing, and I for one will be on the back of my own government to make sure these problems are addressed.

I have heard continually today from the NDP caucus, what about boot camp? I will ask the question, what about the Arrell Youth Centre, known in youthful circles as the Arrell Hilton, built by the NDP government. If he was to question the escape record of the Arrell Hilton, he would find that boot camp is a shining example of keeping people behind doors.

Finally, I would ask that the people in this House get behind this bill so we can draw public attention, so criteria are made in order that judges will have something to go by in putting out conditional sentences only for first offences of minor crimes. I don't consider rape, manslaughter, three-time convictions for drunk driving, break and enter with a lengthy record to be first-time minor offences.

I still have two minutes.

**Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma):** Go ahead.

**Mr Preston:** Thank you, sir. I appreciate that.

I did expect the Liberal caucus, by the way — it's not out of the ordinary for them to complain when we get tough on crime. This is an ever-occurring and recurring situation. Being tough on crime is something I want to see done.

The member for London Centre says we don't have enough probation officers. If that's the case, we should have. If it's our government's fault, it should be fixed.

**Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt):** There go my taxes, you tax-and-spend Tories.

**Mr Preston:** The taxpayer and spender himself has called us tax-and-spend Tories, but that's quite all right; we can stand that.

If we're at fault, it should be fixed. There's no question about that. I'm not making apologies for something we should be doing that we're not doing. If we're not doing it, we should be. If crown attorneys are suffering, they should be increased; there's no question. That is an "if." I've said that across the board, "if" the probation offices are overworked. I know some who really grind. I also know some who are very well read, all on their time in business.

**Mr Laughren:** He said with incredulity.

**Mr Preston:** Yes. I know a lot of very hardworking crowns, and I know some who are not worked at all.

My biggest problem with conditional sentencing is when one of my charges comes to me and says: "Look what this guy did. How come he's allowed to stay home and watch television?"

**The Acting Speaker:** The member's time has expired.

Because the standing orders require that votes on private members' public business not be taken before 12 noon, I will suspend the proceedings until noon, pursuant to standing order 95(e), at which time I'll put the questions on the ballot items debated this morning.

*The House recessed from 1158 to 1200.*

## TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

**The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley):** We will deal first with ballot item number 93, standing in the name of Mr Smith.

Mr Smith has moved private member's notice of motion number 66. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

## CONDITIONAL SENTENCING

**The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley):** We will now deal with ballot item number 94, standing in the name of Mr Preston.

Mr Preston has moved private member's notice of motion number 67. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Did I hear a no? I may have to do this over again. I'm not sure if I heard a no or not.

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker:** In that case, it's carried.

All matters related to private members' public business having been completed, I do now leave the chair and the House will resume at 1:30 pm.

*The House recessed from 1200 to 1331.*

## MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

### SMALL BUSINESS

**Mr Mario Sergio (Yorkview):** The Ontario Restaurant Association recently released figures indicating that the restaurant and foodservice industry continues to face difficult economic times. Ontario bankruptcies in this sector were up in 1996. Bankruptcy figures for the first three months of 1997 seem to indicate that if the trend continues, bankruptcies this year will surpass the record high of 1996.

This is disturbing news at a time when this government is trumpeting that Ontario is once again a place of prosperity, with increased jobs and increased business confidence. This is disturbing news for our youth workers, who represent the main component of workers in the restaurant and foodservice industry, and this is indeed bad news for businesses faced with big hikes in commercial property taxes resulting from the government's downloading plans.

The Premier says that our economy is heading in the right direction. He says his government has a plan to create jobs. He assures young people that they will have a bright future. I urge this government to ponder the Ontario Restaurant Association's warning that we may see many more lost hospitality jobs in 1997.

Increases in commercial property taxes will hurt small businesses. Downloading costs on to municipal taxpayers will hurt small businesses. Businesses will not be able to create more jobs. This is bad news for small businesses. It is bad news for taxpayers. It is bad news for youth employment.

### PUBLIC HEALTH

**Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East):** One of the major social services being dumped on to municipalities by this government is public health. While the province will continue to fund some limited services, like vaccinations and the healthy babies program, municipalities will pick up 100% of the costs of all other programs which are mandatory to deliver. Other public health programs might be provided if the municipality can afford to pay for this.

In Sudbury, this downloading puts our genetic counselling services at risk. For the past 20 years, the health unit has run this as a community-based program with 100% provincial dollars. This is different from southern Ontario, where the program has still been funded by the province but is usually based in a hospital or university setting.

Under Bill 152, this government has decided that funding of genetic counselling services is no longer important and won't pay for this. This does not appear as a mandatory program for municipalities to deliver either. This program will have to stack up against all the other new programs and services and costs being dumped on to municipalities.

Given that the download for the regional municipality of Sudbury is \$73 million alone, the health unit and its

clients are right to be concerned about the future of this service. Northerners who need this service should not have to travel to Toronto to get it. This government needs to reconsider its priorities and continue to fund genetic counselling services.

### SESQUICENTENNIAL OF BROOKLIN

**Mr John O'Toole (Durham East):** On September 6, 1997, the village of Brooklin, located in my riding of Durham East, will celebrate the 150th anniversary of its naming.

The village, located north of Whitby on Highway 12, was founded in 1840 and was previously named Winchester. When residents of the village went to apply for a post office, they discovered there was already a Winchester post office elsewhere in Ontario. On August 11, 1847, the 300 inhabitants of the village met and agreed to change the name to Brooklin. No one is certain why they chose that name, but perhaps it's because of the little brook that trickles through the town.

Throughout the day on September 6, several events have been scheduled to commemorate the heritage of this village, with horse-drawn carriages, entertainment and self-guided tours. Visitors to Brooklin can see some of the historic buildings, such as the old Brooklin Mill, which today houses a hardware store and small engine repair shop, and a former stable currently being used by the W.J. Medland and Son Ltd business.

Like so many Ontario villages, Brooklin is no exception in its contribution to this wonderful province of Ontario. At one time, Brooklin was known as being the smallest town in the world to have a senior A lacrosse team. In 1968 the Redmen senior A lacrosse team won the esteemed Mann Cup, and again in 1969, and the team went on to win the cup again in 1985, 1987, 1988 and 1990. The Mann Cup: Morley Kells would like to forget about this.

Recognition should also be given to community leaders such as Dr John McKinney and John Dryden.

I would like to ask the members of the Legislature to join me in congratulating the residents of Brooklin on their 150th celebration.

### SCHOOL TEACHERS

**Mr Frank Miclash (Kenora):** I wish to read a letter to the editor directed to the Premier from this past August 21, 1997, submitted by a teacher in my riding.

"Every August around this time, I gear up for a new school year. I get ready to teach children to process information and understand reality clearly and love one another.

"But this year a cloud hangs over my mental and emotional preparation. I don't know whether my job of imparting information, cultivating skills, teaching to share, to be socialized and civil will be interrupted and made more difficult by a strike.

"Given the climate being created by this government, I don't know whether I will ever again do my job as well as I have done it in the past.

"I do know that I will continue to teach children to understand history and that history will judge this government as the most shameful, tyrannical and incompetent this province has had since the Family Compact provoked the rebellion of 1837.

"Everyone in the province has been equipped with the skills to realize that Ontario is not working your way. Eventually, you and your party will pay the price of your arrogance. For you see, Premier Harris, in spite of you and in spite of what you would have the people of Ontario believe, we have done our job well."

Upon taking office, the Premier and his minister were clear that they wanted to create a crisis in education. It's really truly unfortunate that the minister's crisis was one that affects the teachers and, more importantly, the students they teach in this province.

That was submitted by a teacher whom I know well, a former colleague from the Kenora Board of Education.

#### GIOVANNI CABOTO

**Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie):** The Italian community of Sault Ste Marie is doing it again, contributing to the quality of life in Sault Ste Marie and enhancing the appreciation we all have for the cultural heritage and history of our community, to commemorate the 500th anniversary of the discovery of Canada by Giovanni Caboto, more commonly known as John Cabot, the first Italian to set foot in Canada.

They've organized a Giovanni Caboto Day to be held next Tuesday, September 9, 1997. With the cooperation of the Italian clubs of our city, a dinner is being sponsored by the Marconi Society and will be held at the Marconi Club on Tuesday, September 29, 1997, to honour this great Italian. The highlight of this event will be a visit from the highest-ranking jurist of Italian descent, the Honourable Frank Iacobucci of the Supreme Court of Canada, who will be the guest speaker at the dinner at the Marconi Club.

For those of you who may not know who John Cabot is, and I doubt there will be many, it says in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* that he was a "navigator and explorer who by his voyages in 1497 and 1498 helped lay the groundwork for the later British claim to Canada." I today want to stand in my place at the Legislature of Ontario and offer congratulations to the Italian club in Sault Ste Marie, to the Marconi Club, for taking the lead in this very exciting initiative and to Tony Celli, president of the Marconi Club, for giving his leadership.

#### DURHAM BOARD OF EDUCATION

**Mr Jim Flaherty (Durham Centre):** I rise today to bring the attention of my colleagues to the tremendous work being done by the Durham Board of Education in the continuing education of teachers and the efforts made by a

large number of teachers to continue their education on their own time, at their own expense.

In August, the Durham board held staff development and training sessions with regard to the new Ontario curriculum, creative problem-solving and cooperative team learning. The sessions were attended by over 600 educators, 80 of whom were from other Ontario boards. Some were from as far away as the Maritimes, Quebec, Germany, Australia, New Zealand, as well as the United States.

The Durham Board of Education is noted for the innovation and excellence of its staff development programs. In fact, the board was the recipient of the 1996 Carl Bertelsmann Prize for excellence and innovation in educational programming.

Winning that prize has helped Durham's already growing reputation. They will host and train educators from Scotland, Norway, Japan, Germany and Korea later this year. An international network of centres of learning is being established this fall between the Durham board and a number of European school authorities. This kind of sharing is critical if we are to survive and give our children the best education possible in this new information economy. We all have much to learn from one another.

It is good news not only that the Durham board is leading the way in staff development and training, but also that so many educators from Durham and elsewhere used their own time and money to further their professional development this past August. They are to be congratulated.

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#### PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC SERVICES

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** I agree with Jane Becker about the Province of Ontario Savings Office:

"This provincial government bank — one of the best-kept secrets in the financial community — serves about 50,000 contented depositors with simple, hassle-free and above all pleasant banking at 23 branches and five agencies across Ontario....

"You can't get a loan, a mutual fund or an RRSP at a Savings Office. But you'll never be hounded out of a lineup and told to use an ATM (the POSO has no ATMs and few lineups), or charged that abomination, a monthly maintenance fee. The staff doesn't change every month or so...and go out of their way to give good service, such as telephoning a customer if they must debit an account.

"Now the provincial government is threatening to change it all. In April, it told Savings Office customers by letter that it was reviewing the operation. Possibilities for the future were 'improved efficiency' under provincial ownership, a partnership with an existing bank or trust company, or outright sale....

"The government has now named CIBC Wood Gundy to conduct a review of POSO operations and report by mid-August. Talk about inviting the fox into the henhouse.

"All this makes little sense. The Savings Office is profitable, works well for the government, customers like

it, and there is no obvious outside group lusting to take it over....

"Is the government now going to destroy 75 years of good relations by handing us over to a megabank? If it does, you can say goodbye to the last shred of civilized, gougeless, customer-friendly banking in Ontario."

#### DIANA, PRINCESS OF WALES

**Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale):** I'd like to take this opportunity to add my voice to the millions who are expressing in so many ways their shock and deep sadness over the tragic death of Diana, Princess of Wales.

I had the privilege to meet and spend some time with Diana at an event when she was visiting Toronto. Like all who came to meet her, I was struck by her beauty, her kindness and her warmth. The world watched Diana grow from a young, timid bride to a strong, caring person who took control over her own life. She had to do it in the public eye, and I think one of the reasons the princess was so well regarded and loved is that, like the rest of us, she wasn't perfect and didn't try to pretend to be. She spoke honestly and candidly about her joys and sorrows.

I remember when we had the opportunity to talk for a bit how her eyes lit up when I asked her about her sons, Prince William and Prince Harry. She said she missed them and was really looking forward to going home and seeing them again.

Speaker, we are all deeply saddened by the death of Princess Diana. She will be sincerely missed. Diana, may you rest in peace.

#### UNITED WAY CAMPAIGN

**Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland):** The closing of the Exhibition is a traditional signal that summer is coming to an end, but in the rest of Ontario it signals something almost as significant: the launch of the province-wide United Way campaign.

As I'm sure the members of this House are aware, United Way chapters are managed and run largely by volunteers, countless volunteers working selflessly for the betterment of their fellow Canadians. In Ontario, 44 United Way organizations raised \$130 million last year. That's a 2.9% increase over the previous year's total.

I'm particularly pleased to be able to report that the Northumberland United Way came third in Ontario and sixth in Canada for campaign growth in 1996. In fact, Northumberland residents contributed almost \$500,000 to the campaign for an impressive 14.5% increase in contributions last year. United Way funds are used to support some 4,000 member agencies across the country, ranging from the Canadian National Institute for the Blind to Big Sisters and the Boy Scouts of Canada.

I can't think of a more worthy organization to support, and I would urge the Ontario public and the members of this House to dig deep this fall and give generously to the United Way. As the slogan says, "It's the way to help the most."

## REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

### STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE OMBUDSMAN

**Mr John O'Toole (Durham East):** I beg leave to present the final report on review of the Office of the Ombudsman, 1992-97, from the standing committee on the Ombudsman and move its adoption.

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

**Mr O'Toole:** Yes, Mr Speaker. First, I would like to thank the previous Chair of the Ombudsman committee, Mr John Parker, MPP for York East. Further, I would remind members that all three parties worked hard on and participated in the unanimous adoption of this report. The work should not go unrecognized, and I appreciate the support.

I move adjournment of the debate.

**The Speaker:** Mr O'Toole moves adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Reports by committees? Introduction of bills? Motions? Deferred votes?

It's time for oral questions. Official opposition —

**Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William):** Ministry statements?

**The Speaker:** Oh yes, I missed that. How did I do that, you might add. It's clearly not my fault; it's left out on my list here.

**Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt):** Blame it on staff. Shame on you.

**The Speaker:** Just kidding. No, it's not; it's right there. Statements by ministries?

## STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

### VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

**Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for women's issues):** It is with some pleasure that I rise in the House today to outline a series of opportunities and challenges for communities across Ontario. I'm speaking about the grant program contained in the Agenda for Action: Prevention of Violence Against Women.

On July 2 we introduced that action plan, which emphasizes our government's commitment to ensuring that women can live and work in safety, without fear of violence. The plan includes \$27 million in new spending over the next four years on top of the more than \$100 million this government spends each year on violence prevention.

It's a goal that can only be reached with a coordinated long-term strategy. We have the strategy in place, with a lot of help from members in this place and citizens from

across the province of Ontario, and now we are continuing the work through our communities to meet that challenge.

The Agenda for Action includes specific plans for six new domestic assault courts and for increased counselling services for children who have witnessed or experienced domestic violence. The plan enhances funding for educational tools that will teach our young people right from the start that violence is never acceptable. The plan also includes a significant community component in the form of priority project funding.

This year we have a total of \$675,000 available to non-profit community groups who offer creative solutions to the issues of violence prevention and women's economic independence. We will be giving priority to projects that are submitted jointly by two or more community organizations or that incorporate support from the private sector.

Our government is encouraging communities to work together to find solutions for their particular needs, and this priority project funding is part, we think, of that answer.

The grants will help support innovative projects that address one or more of the following priorities: community safety and violence prevention, economic self-sufficiency for women, and facilitating the transition from living with violence to becoming economically independent.

One of the ways in which women can break free of a violent situation is by having enough money to live independently. One of our goals as a government is to ensure that women have the tools they need to become economically independent.

To help women make the transition from living with violence to becoming economically self-sufficient, projects could include creating models to provide counselling, financial planning, career planning and job training for women who have been abused. Or they could involve developing and testing models to coordinate existing services that allow women to move from violent situations where their lives and finances are controlled to a position of emotional and financial independence.

We are looking for projects that will promote economic development through the creation of new resource materials, through mentoring programs and through small business development. We are looking for projects that are geared towards the development of flexible service models and improved service coordination and delivery. And we are looking for innovative projects that will raise awareness and change negative behaviour that devalues women and girls.

We expect that the opportunities presented by the priority project funding will inspire communities to develop creative, coordinated responses that will benefit women in particular and, by extension, our province and families as a whole.

Mr Speaker, I'm looking forward to sharing with you in the months ahead some of the exciting, innovative projects that will be originating in communities across Ontario.

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**Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William):** The minister responsible for women's issues must truly be desperate to

have her government say something to women that she would get up and make this kind of statement today. I suppose she's working in a context of a government that is prepared to hit women and children at every opportunity and on every front, so she feels any little bit that she might be able to offer is better than the absolute nothing, or worse than that, the attacks that are launched on women and children by virtually every other ministry of her government.

This is far too little. It's not just too late but it continues to be too little: \$675,000, a small part of the \$5 million worth of Band-Aids that the minister actually announced originally in July. But now \$675,000, and with that she's going to do community safety and violence prevention, economic self-sufficiency for women and she's going to facilitate the transition from living with violence to becoming economically independent — with \$675,000. That is an unbelievable statement to make.

It is, however, perhaps justified by the fact that she's not really going to provide service to women and children. They're just going to create models. At a time when this government has put women and children in a position where they cannot be economically independent, the minister talks about using \$675,000 to create models that might help women and children become economically independent. This is a government that has Bill 136 in front of this House even now, which takes pay equity away from women, which says to employers, "If you haven't got a pay equity plan, don't worry, you won't have to have one unless some woman complains," which makes it very easy for employers but virtually impossible for women. I don't know how the minister for women's issues cannot be on her feet condemning Bill 136 in the way in which it takes pay equity again from women.

This is a minister talking about economic independence for women and children. There was a story in the paper just yesterday about how many families in Metropolitan Toronto are being forced into motels because of the lack of affordable social housing, and yet this government has another bill where they're going to dump social housing on to municipalities. Economic independence? What chance do we have?

Minister, economic independence means women being able to get out of abusive situations and find that independence. You're talking here about creating models to provide counselling. You know full well your government cancelled the counselling that was provided to women who did escape from abusive situations. You cancelled the counselling for second-stage housing. That is absolutely right.

You know, Minister, that if women are going to get out of abusive situations they need help. One thing we will applaud is that you are expanding the domestic violence courts, although you haven't actually announced them here today and it seems you're not going to announce one for northwestern Ontario, which we'd very much like to see. But even then, having the courts is not going to be helpful if women can't get the legal support they need, and your Attorney General has made sure that women are not going

to get legal aid support for domestic cases. Some 80% of women cannot get legal aid, so you, as part of your \$5-million Band-Aid, are going to come up with \$300,000 to provide emergency legal counselling for women, a very small Band-Aid to try and deal with the mess your Attorney General has made.

When we're on the topic of messes the Attorney General has made for women, what women are going to find economic independence, if they actually take the step of leaving an abusive situation, when they don't know whether they are ever going to get their family support money because the family support plan continues to be in absolute chaos?

Minister, you talk here about raising awareness and changing negative behaviour that devalues women and girls. Start by educating the Attorney General, who said that violence against women is a sickness. Tell the Attorney General loudly and clearly that domestic violence and sexual assault are a crime, and the minister has to be prepared to acknowledge that.

Maybe you could start your education and awareness campaign by educating the Minister of Health. Women's College Hospital had to take your Minister of Health into court to even get them to acknowledge that there just might be a unique role played by a hospital which is the national leader, as you full well know, in dealing with sexual assault against women.

Economic independence from a government that cut 23% from welfare rates, and 60% of the people affected were women who are sole-support parents to their children? There is a gross hypocrisy in this statement and it is incredibly offensive and demeaning in itself to women.

I want to end by telling you that even the community models you want to develop are causing concern in the field. You know that. Your colleague the Solicitor General has a letter from the Northwestern Ontario Women's Decade Council in which they express their very real concern that any dollars you are putting into violence-against-women programs are going into new community groups that will be run by volunteers. They plead with you to provide —

**The Speaker:** Thank you. Responses, third party.

**Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale):** Minister, I am disappointed in your statement today. I heard that you were making a statement and I hoped there would be something substantive announced today. I think every member in this House, including members of your government, has repeatedly said that violence against women is unacceptable, that there should be zero tolerance and it was a priority of the government.

We are waiting and waiting for you, the minister responsible for women's issues, to actually put your money where your mouth is in terms of helping to prevent violence against women and then making sure that programs are in place and up and running for victims of domestic violence. You have not done that today. I don't know why you made this announcement today. Maybe there is some pressure on you to get up and make some kind of announcement about what you are doing on women's issues.

This has all been announced before. There is nothing new in this; a piddly amount of money, \$655,000, to create models. Models for what? We have real victims of violence out there now.

*Interjection.*

**Ms Churley:** I wish the minister would just listen for a few minutes instead of sitting there and repeatedly trying to defend her record here. Since this government has come to power, you started off by cutting welfare, which affected all kinds of women in precarious domestic situations. You really messed up. The Attorney General totally messed up the family support plan, absolutely messed it up, so that thousands and thousands of women were affected by that. Some women who may have been in violent situations were affected by that.

Minister, your government has gotten rid of employment equity and pay equity for some of the most vulnerable women in the province at the lowest-paying jobs. You have plans now to get rid of rent control. You cut completely the counselling and the substance of second-stage housing, where women and their kids had an opportunity to go after having to leave the family home and before they were actually on their own again.

Child care: The Minister of Community and Social Services seems to continue to say that they are increasing and improving child care. You are going to start forcing women who have children in school to go out on workfare, but there is no child care. There's a piddly amount attached to that.

There are women's groups across the province who have provided you, Minister, as they have us, with evidence that there have been women who were forced to go back into violent situations because of the cuts across the board of programs that your government has made.

1400

Minister, what I want to say to you today is, take a deep breath, go talk once again to the women who are out there working in the field and listen to what they have to say. Part of the problem here is that once again this government isn't listening to the people. The people who are involved in this issue continue to tell you over and over again that, overall, your cuts have hurt women and children most in our province. They are telling you repeatedly, what good is some kind of model for economic development after you've made all these cuts? Legal aid has been affected by the cuts that you made. The supports that women need —

**Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs):** You made the cuts to legal aid. You made those cuts. Ask the lady sitting beside you.

**Ms Churley:** No, Attorney General. This is a government that once again absolutely refuses to take any responsibility for their own actions. Day after day we get up in this House and try to talk to the government about how their cuts are hurting real people in the province. Once again today we have the Attorney General and the minister responsible for women's issues over there just talking back, yap, yap, yapping, saying, "You did that; it's your

fault." Take some responsibility for what's happening out there. Women are hurting, kids are hurting. This is not a joke.

This announcement that you made today is not going to make one dent. It's a repeat of what you said before.

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** That's a very sad statement.

**Ms Churley:** It is not a sad statement. Your statement today is a sad statement. The women of the province need to be listened to. The women of the province are telling you that your cuts to programs across the board have hurt them, and women who are trying to escape from violent situations are telling you, in some cases, that they have to go back. That is a serious problem. Please deal with it.

## ORAL QUESTIONS

### IPPERWASH PROVINCIAL PARK

**Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt):** My question is to the Premier and it has to do with Ipperwash. It was two years ago today that the occupation took place, the first time in over 100 years that a member of a first nation was killed in a confrontation with the government, and a senior OPP officer was convicted.

You've maintained all along that it was the OPP that made all the decisions at Ipperwash and they were responsible for the situation. You said your office had no files, no records, because you had no involvement. However, we find that on September 6, the day of the shooting, that morning, hours before the shooting, the headline in the local paper the *Sarnia Observer* said, "Queen's Park to Take Hard Line Against Park Occupiers: Beaubien," the local Conservative member. It goes on to say that he had been in touch with your office and had been communicating about what the government's intentions were. That contradicts what you had said about no involvement.

Are you prepared today, Premier, to agree that we need a public inquiry to clear up these contradictions?

**Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier):** The Attorney General can respond.

**Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs):** Without question, the government has been clear and consistent on this issue. The documentation which the member has read indicates what we've repeatedly stated and that is that the government would not negotiate substantive issues while the occupation continued. The Premier indicated that he gave no directions to the OPP regarding negotiations, regarding any operational issue that they were involved with, and that has been confirmed by Commissioner O'Grady.

The step that the government did take was to seek a civil injunction. That's what they did and that is what the documents indicate. That's in fact what the government did in this matter.

**Mr Phillips:** I accuse the government of saying this on September 6, "Queen's Park to take hard line with occupiers." That is what happened.

I follow up with further contradictions. In answer to a question in the House when we asked, "What directions did you give Ms Hutton before she went to those meetings with the OPP superintendent?" you said, "None." We now find from minutes released of those meetings that Ms Hutton at that meeting on September 6, a senior OPP officer there listening to it, relayed the instructions she had from you the night before. She said, "Premier, last night, out of the park only, nothing else." Clearly, you told her, "Communicate to the OPP, 'Out of the park — nothing else.'"

I will go on to say we have evidence now that at the end of that meeting, the OPP superintendent who was at that meeting, listening to Ms Hutton, was then in contact with the commanding officer at the command post at 11:12 am on the morning of September 6, shortly after Ms Hutton made those remarks to the meeting.

I say again, Premier, do you now agree that we need a public inquiry to clear up these clear contradictions in your statements?

**Hon Mr Harnick:** The facts the member outlines are clearly indicative of the fact that the government position was that there would be no negotiations on substantive issues while the occupation continued. There was no direction given to the Ontario Provincial Police. This has been confirmed by Commissioner O'Grady. The Ontario Provincial Police were involved in making all operational decisions. That's what they did. Commissioner O'Grady was clear: He takes no direction on any operational issues, and didn't in this case.

**Mr Phillips:** I'm prepared to begin using stronger language with the Premier, language that he used last week in the House. He used the term "coverup." I will say that is increasingly the conclusion we are reaching.

I use that language because you used the language in the House. On April 22, 1997, you said there was no direction given to the OPP before, after or during any other situation, no direction given by the government; no direction given by any of our staff, no direction by any of the ministers. However, in the minutes of the blockade committee meetings, it says, "The province will take steps to remove the occupiers ASAP." Second, it goes on to say, "The police have been asked to remove the occupiers from the park." The government asked the police, instructed the police to remove the occupiers from the park.

I use this term carefully. Premier, do you not now think it's time for a public inquiry to air the coverup that in our opinion is going on around the whole Ipperwash affair?

**Hon Mr Harnick:** I've read the minutes, and the minutes are clear. There was absolutely no direction whatsoever given to the Ontario Provincial Police. The government position was quite simply that we would not negotiate on substantive issues, that the OPP was in charge of dealing with the operational issues. The facts are quite clear that what the government did was seek a civil injunction. That is exactly what they did. The court record is there to see what we did. That quite simply is the situation.

## YOUNG OFFENDERS

**Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming):** I have a question for the Solicitor General. I'd like to get back to that breakout at what I call Camp Run-Amok. Your parliamentary assistant, the member for Scarborough West, has stated, "I'm 90% sure the camp didn't get hit by lightning." I think maybe he was right, because Hydro confirmed that there were no lightning strikes after 5 pm that evening.

The only other answer that could be available is that the alarm system itself was put on bypass by the staff because they couldn't control the young offenders from activating the alarms continually when they kept kicking the doors. Why? Because the young offenders caught on that you had approved doors that open out, rather than open in, which is today's standard to prevent this kind of situation from happening and to prevent breakouts.

Why did you rush to open this facility when your security analysis noted this deficiency?

**Hon Robert W. Runciman (Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services):** I indicated last week that there was an internal investigation being conducted to determine what happened and why it happened. I expect to receive that report today or perhaps at the beginning of next week, and we will make that information public.

**Mr Ramsay:** Minister, I hope your investigation shows that you didn't equip the facility properly, because not only did you allow it to open with doors on a push rather than a pull mechanism, you allowed the camp to operate without segregation cells that are installed in every other facility in the province.

Since the breakout, you've indicated that you don't have the means to deal with young offenders who keep acting up, but you opened a facility that didn't have one of the very crucial tools available to you today. As you know, segregation cells are used to handle crisis situations, and when one developed, this staff couldn't cope.

Why did you open a poorly equipped facility, putting the staff and the community at risk?

**Hon Mr Runciman:** As I indicated in my earlier response, we'll have the answers to those kinds of questions, related to the problems that occurred, late today or early next week.

1410

**Mr Ramsay:** I think it's going to be a very long report, because you've got another big problem there at Camp Run-Amok, and that is that you allowed a facility to open with a staff that was improperly trained and with very little experience. You handed over the responsibility to guard and protect 32 young offenders to a staff of 33, only two of that staff having had previous experience with young offenders. Instead of the normal five weeks' training at the Bell Cairn training school, followed by three and a half weeks of experience in a facility, this staff only received two weeks' training at the school and no practical experience in a jail at all. No wonder the staff couldn't handle the kids. They never had the chance to work with

young offenders in the presence of an experienced officer. In fact, I wonder how many of those staff had even met a young offender before the day this facility opened.

Why don't you do what you should have done in the first place? Before you expose the community to any further risk, do the right thing: Close this facility and fix it.

**Hon Mr Runciman:** It's clear that the Liberals and the NDP want this project to fail, and some members of the press —

*Interjections.*

**Hon Mr Runciman:** During the last full year the Liberal government was in power, in the young offenders system they had 69 escapes. Last year, under a Conservative government, we had 17 escapes.

I want to say that the young offenders system this government inherited from the previous two governments was the most expensive system in Canada.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Order. I would ask the members in the third party to come to order, please. Member for Cochrane North, come to order. Lake Nipigon, come to order.

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker:** Come to order, member for Lake Nipigon. I'm not warning you again.

**Hon Mr Runciman:** As well as being the most expensive system, it was the most unsuccessful system: 64% of the people in the system are repeat offenders coming back into the system; 80% of the offenders in our adult system are graduates of the youth justice system in Ontario. That's the system we inherited from those two governments.

We're trying to do something to change that. We're trying to improve the system. We're trying to turn around young people from a life of crime, and the Ontario people agree with us. They think something should be done, and we're trying to do something.

## FIRE IN HAMILTON

**Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River):** I have a question for the Minister of Environment and Energy. On August 8, my colleague the member for Hamilton Centre asked you for a public inquiry into the Plastimet fire in Hamilton. You said at that time that you would "seriously consider a public inquiry if Hamilton regional council," which has the responsibility for public health in Hamilton-Wentworth, "asked for one." Your colleague the Minister of Health said, "If they recommend an inquiry, I think politicians would be obliged to listen."

Then we have the story in today's Hamilton Spectator, "Sterling Says No Probe." This is in spite of the fact that the Hamilton regional council has voted in favour of a public inquiry. The Hamilton regional council wants a public inquiry. You're saying no.

Minister, this would be a good time to start showing some responsibility. It would be a good time to start lis-

tening to people. Will you listen to people and call a public inquiry into the Hamilton fire?

**Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Environment and Energy):** I would like the leader of the third party to indicate to this Legislature a little bit more responsibility in how he poses the question with regard to this matter. The Minister of Health, as I understand it, said that an inquiry should be seriously looked at if the medical officer of health indicated one would be needed. He didn't say anything with regard to the region.

I said that I would look at their request and look at the evidence which they would bring forward that there was a cause for an inquiry and I would take that seriously. I have not received formal notification of their motion, nor the supporting evidence which backs their motion, and I will be looking forward to receiving that.

**Mr Hampton:** Minister, let me draw you a picture. The Hamilton-Wentworth regional council is responsible for public health in the Hamilton-Wentworth region. They voted this morning to ask you for a public inquiry. They are joined by the council of the city of Hamilton and the firefighters' union. Nurses are asking for a public inquiry. Greenpeace is asking for a public inquiry. The whole Hamilton community is asking you for a public inquiry into the Plastimet fire so that all the facts can come out.

Will you start listening to people? Will your government finally start listening to the people who are threatened by your environmental cutbacks, your health cutbacks? Will you listen to them and call a public inquiry?

**Hon Mr Sterling:** As I have said to members from Hamilton both in my caucus and in the opposition benches, I invite any questions as to who did what when and whether or not they have concerns over what particular action was taken at what time. I've asked citizens for questions. We have an information trailer actually down on the site providing citizens with information and for questions they have with regard to my ministry and with regard to the medical officer of health. You have an inquiry because people will not answer questions. We are answering questions.

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Final supplementary.

**Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale):** Minister, you just demonstrated that once again you aren't listening. Try to listen to people. The people of Hamilton, everybody in Hamilton, are telling you why they want a public inquiry.

Let me list a few of the questions they have. They want to look at the pollutants emitted at Plastimet and their effect on the health of the people who live there. They want to look at the effectiveness and the appropriateness of the evacuation. They want some answers about the cleanup. They want to know how to avoid similar incidents in the future. And yes, Minister, they do want to have a look at whether some of your vicious cutbacks in enforcement and your gutting of environmental laws played a role in the Plastimet disaster.

Minister, I have a feeling that maybe that's why you're trying to avoid a public inquiry, because you know you

have something to hide. You do. Otherwise, you would agree to it. Everybody wants it. This was not just an ordinary fire. It's a severe toxic wasteland right now and people were affected.

Will you change your mind and give the people what they want, a public inquiry?

**Hon Mr Sterling:** I have great concern for the people of Hamilton, as have my ministry officials, as demonstrated by their dedication on the job not only on the site but off the site in terms of the tremendous effort that my laboratories put forward to analyse samples in record times in order to provide the medical officer of health with information and the fire department with the necessary information.

If someone wants to bring some evidence to me in writing about some particular problem, we will look at that. If we cannot answer that question or there's some problem with answering that question, then there would be a call for an inquiry. But no one has presented any evidence at this point in time that anything is untoward, wrong. In fact, I received a letter from the mayor of Hamilton just today congratulating the ministry on its efforts.

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#### ONTARIO HYDRO

**Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River):** I have a question to the Premier. We understand that the Premier's office has basically taken over the Hydro file, so Premier, I want to ask you, can you confirm that there was a leak of heavy water contaminated with tritium from a unit at the Pickering nuclear plant last night? Can you confirm that and can you tell us what steps your government is taking in terms of protecting public health and safety and the environment?

**Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier):** No, I can't confirm that because your assumption that I'm taking over the file is wrong.

**Mr Hampton:** One would hope the Premier would be concerned about this kind of issue, especially a Premier who has had so much to say about Hydro of late.

Let me ask you this, Premier. This is the report that is on CBC and elsewhere in the media today. The problem we have, besides the problem with your attitude here, that you don't take these things seriously, is the fact that almost a month ago now your government said you were going to take some steps with Hydro. What we've seen since your announcement of a month ago is that the cost estimates have gone from \$5.5 billion to \$8 billion and now, the other day, to over \$10 billion. We haven't seen the so-called terms of reference for the legislative committee to deal with Hydro issues. Can you tell us what your government is doing in terms of exercising your control over Hydro?

**Hon Mr Harris:** As you know, the Minister of Energy has been in discussion, I believe, with both parties and I think very shortly will be releasing those terms of reference. If you were really serious about catching up to the member for Renfrew North, who is a little more on top of

this issue, you should ask the Minister of Energy a question.

**Mr Hampton:** Once again, there was a tritium leak last night at the Pickering nuclear station and this is the attitude the Premier shows towards this kind of serious issue. Premier, since you don't want to answer that question, let me put another question to you.

We think it is time to hold an independent inquiry into Hydro. We believe that if we're going to get into all of the details here, if we're going to get all the information out, a public inquiry, an independent inquiry, should be held. Your government can't defend the cost estimates, for example, that have gone from \$5 billion to \$8 billion to \$10 billion in three weeks. People cannot believe your story about no rate increases. Similarly, a month ago you were in such haste to do something, and yet nothing has happened. Now we have this illustration today of a heavy water leak and you try to fob it off as if it's not important.

Premier, let's have an independent inquiry and let's get to the bottom of the issues at Ontario Hydro.

**Hon Mr Harris:** Just for the record, this is the 18th time you have now called for a full public inquiry. I don't know why you want to shirk your own responsibility. The minister has indicated that we would like to set up a committee to take a look at Hydro. He has been in communication with you on that. I think the terms of reference are coming very shortly. Should you have asked him the question, as you should have, he could have given you the precise date and time, I think, and started to talk about the terms of reference.

I also can tell you that the ministry, yes, is aware of the incident that you are talking about that took place last night, as heard on CBC. I know he'd be happy to share that information with you should you wish to ask him. If you're interested in the information, ask him. If you are interested in trying to play catch-up with the Liberals on getting in on fixing this abominable mess we inherited from you, from Hydro, then that's fine.

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Answer, please.

**Hon Mr Harris:** I'm happy to respond to the disastrous mess we inherited from Hydro and the lack of accountability, but if you actually want facts and information, then the Minister of Energy —

**The Speaker:** Thank you. New question, official opposition.

#### EDUCATION REFORM

**Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William):** My question is for the Premier. This week, you sat down with union leaders to discuss concerns with Bill 136. You agreed to at least consider alternatives to legislation that would strip away bargaining rights.

In the meantime, we understand that your Minister of Education is preparing legislation which would take away even more rights from teachers. We understand that some of the proposals being considered are giving the new school boards unilateral powers to raise class sizes and take away preparation time, that he is considering remov-

ing individual contracts, which would essentially end job security for teachers, and that apparently he is even planning to disband the Education Relations Commission which, as you know, serves to protect the rights of students in a strike situation. It would suggest that he is considering the right to strike on a permanent basis.

I believe your minister is forcing a major confrontation with the province's teachers. You have said this week that that is not what you want. Will you tell your Minister of Education to set aside these legislative proposals and come up with something that would avoid labour strife in classrooms across the province?

**Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier):** Really and truly, your understanding is based on some silly fearmongering, and I don't know where you get it from.

**Mrs McLeod:** The issue is too serious both for teachers and students who would be affected by any decisions this government makes for me to respond in kind to the Premier's comment. I would love to think that my concerns are based on fearmongering or rumour. I do not believe they are. The best proof of this would be for the minister not to bring forward legislation which contains any of those proposals.

We understand there is one other proposal being considered, and I hope it would be of concern to you if it's true that it is in legislation: a proposal to amend the Education Act to allow people without teaching certificates to teach in particular areas. I want you to know what the Minister of Education was told by the Metro parents' council, not the educators but the parents, about this idea. They said: "If differentiated staffing is hidden somewhere in your foundation grant, I assure you that parents will not be pleased."

Parents want fully trained and qualified teachers working with their children, yet your Minister of Education appears prepared to go ahead and save dollars by letting untrained people teach. Will you assure us that this provision will not be in any legislation that is presented by your Minister of Education?

**Hon Mr Harris:** I can assure you, as a former teacher and a former trustee and a former board chair, what we will do in any of these areas, including governing legislation, including negotiations and including excellence and quality in education, is whatever we can to take us from 10th and last in quality across this country, and from first in the highest cost and least efficiencies across the country, in an education system that we inherited from you and the NDP.

Our goal clearly — and I think it has been repeated by OTF what the goal is and in a very complimentary way. I think they supported the goal: How can we be more efficient and how can we get excellence into the classroom, into that system? That is our goal, that is our motive, and everything we do will continue to be aboveboard and fair and not based on silly fearmongering and nonsense that you continue to spew out in this House.

**Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma):** I have a new question of the Premier on the same matter. On Wednesday, August 27, the Deputy Minister of Education and Training, John

Weir, and Craig Rix, of the minister's office, attended a meeting with the representatives of teachers in this province. They indicated what the government's position was. They said that one of the goals which was non-negotiable for the government was to move to the lowest possible cost for education; that is, taking \$1 billion out of the education system and ensuring that Ontario schools would be funded at no higher than the national average; that is, the average not including Ontario, and I suppose not including the Northwest Territories and Yukon, because they have high expenditures.

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Why are you using this baseline average for determining per pupil funding in this province, in the wealthiest province with the largest and most diverse population and the largest number of students in the country? Why are you talking about setting us at the middle of the pack instead of at the head of the pack?

**Hon Mr Harris:** I'm pleased to read from the communiqué issued by OTF-FEO following that meeting that says: "Government representatives indicated the government has two goals, and the number one goal was the highest student achievement." That remains our goal.

As for money, yes, we'd like to get there at the most effective and least wasteful way that we can. To that end, I would read you this quotation: "In Canada we spend per capita more on education than most other places in the world. I think it's a question of focus and a question of how we can get the system to do its job." Bob Rae, February 6, 1992. That's what we're doing.

**Mr Wildman:** Quoting the same communiqué that the Premier has, is this not true that "the government officials have indicated that the scope of bargaining will be narrowly defined, all staffing issues will be management rights, questions of pupil-teacher ratio, preparation time, pupil-teacher contact time will not be subjects that professional teachers will have a say in but they will be simply determined by management"?

Is that the government's position? Is it the government's position that people without teaching contracts, without professional teaching qualifications, will be able to be hired by management to teach students? Is that the government's position? And if it is, how can you guarantee that we will have high-quality education for the students of this province?

**Hon Mr Harris:** The government's position is that we will continue to negotiate in good faith, as these discussions are, as formal discussions are, both legislatively and otherwise.

I can absolutely guarantee and assure you that the quality of education that our students get will be superior to what it was under your government.

#### PROVINCIAL PARKS

**Mr Bruce Smith (Middlesex):** My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources. As summer comes to a close, I've had the opportunity to talk to a number of people who have taken the opportunity to access various

sites in our provincial parks system over the course of the summer. As you can appreciate, many of these people view our provincial parks system and value it as a great amenity and resource to the province. However, they have heard alleged reports that the province intends to close or already has closed a number of parks. Would you please respond to that alleged concern?

**Hon Chris Hodgson (Minister of Natural Resources, Northern Development and Mines):** I'd like to thank the member for Middlesex for the excellent question. I would like to inform him and his constituents and the House, for the record, that the Mike Harris government has not closed any provincial parks. In fact, we've opened parks by creating, last February 27, new parks and protected areas.

We care very deeply about our parks system, like the vast majority of Ontarians do, and we want to see our parks system get better. We have one of the best systems in the world and improvements under our government's initiatives in the last two years are making it the best in the world.

We've created a new division in the Ministry of Natural Resources called Ontario parks division and we've set up a special-purpose account that all revenues that are raised by our parks, by gate receipts or other means, go directly towards expenditures in our parks system. This is going to improve our parks system for years to come.

**Mr Smith:** In my initial question I referred to park utilization. I was wondering if you could comment on the extent to which parks have been utilized and the effectiveness of our parks promotion strategy.

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** All Ontario is waiting to hear this.

**Hon Mr Hodgson:** I know the member for St Catharines likes to interject and he's not interested in this, but this is great news even for the Liberals in this House. Park attendance is up this year by over 10% from 1996. I'll just give you a few examples.

**Mr Bradley:** The bad news is the government's appointment of Seabrook.

**Hon Mr Hodgson:** I realize the Liberals aren't interested in good news, but this is good news for the people of Ontario who care about parks. I can assure you that the Mike Harris government cares about our parks, is deeply committed to our parks, and I'm reporting that this view is shared by Ontarians in record numbers this year.

Attendance at Algonquin Park is up 47.6% in day use and a little under 10% in overnight camping. At Awenda Park in Georgian Bay there's been a 41% increase in day use and a 23.6% increase in camping. Sandbanks Provincial Park has seen a 25% increase in day use and a 15% increase in overnight camping. At Presqu'île there has been an 83% increase in day use and a 15.5% increase in camping.

To the member for Middlesex and the people of Ontario, this is great news for Ontario, and I'm pleased you asked the question.

## MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

**Mr Peter North (Elgin):** My question will be to the Premier. In the last year or so the government has been asking municipalities across the province to amalgamate, and during the course of the amalgamations and the discussions that have been had since, a number of municipalities in our particular county are having discussions about what they can do with equipment, to share it, to move it along, to move it perhaps from upper tier to lower tier. During the course of those conversations, it has been brought to their attention that perhaps there's going to be an 8% sales tax placed on that equipment moving from one level to another level. Could you clear this question up for us, Premier?

**Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier):** As usual the member has slewed right to a commonsense problem that is out there and taking place and has asked a very pointed and excellent question. I'm not aware of the sales tax applying from one municipality to another, or an exemption thereof to facilitate that type of sharing and cooperation. I'm sure, though, that the Minister of Finance is aware of that. He may be out there meeting with them right now; I don't know. He's probably involved in other meetings. I just don't know where he is.

Let me assure the member that he not only raises a good issue, but I think he is prepared to propose a good solution. I'm going to wait to hear that and see what it is, and if it makes sense, I'll present it to the Minister of Finance.

**Mr North:** If you think that question's good, you should hear this one. My solution would be simply no tax.

My second question is with regard to the downloading of some provincial roads to municipalities. In that circumstance, Premier, you would know that IMOS has been contracted for maintenance work in this province to deal with provincial roads. This presents a rather interesting circumstance for the people who have become part of amalgamated municipalities that are going to be receiving provincial roads.

I wonder if either yourself or perhaps the Minister of Transportation can give us some assurances or answer some questions with regard to the issue of whether the provincial government expects municipalities to take on these contracts, or whether municipalities are not going to be bound to these contracts. If they're not going to be bound to these contracts, perhaps you or the Minister of Transportation could tell us what it's going to cost us in this province to get out of those contracts.

**Hon Mr Harris:** You're right, it is an equally good question and I'll refer it to the Minister of Transportation.

**Hon Al Palladini (Minister of Transportation):** I want to reiterate the same thing: It is a very good question and certainly one that has been asked of me by municipalities, on the effect of highway transfers that presently are being maintained by IMOS. Certainly on highways that are affected by the transfer, the municipality will assume the maintenance as of January 1, 1998. We will continue to pay for the maintenance up to that point. From

then on, the municipality will take on that responsibility. Obviously, the contracts are already in place, so naturally IMOS would bill the province and the province would bill the municipality for their share of the maintenance.

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## MAGNETIC RESONANCE IMAGING

**Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South):** I have a question for the Minister of Health. I'd like you to please respond. We've heard a lot about your announcements telling us about the wonderful things that Ontario will have. Part of those have been about MRIs, special machines that take pictures of soft tissue, useful in diagnosis.

In the context of that, Minister, I'd like to read you a review from the real world where your policies are taking hold and where patients are having to experience the Mike Harris-Jim Wilson version of health care in Ontario.

Dr Dobkin writes to you:

"Dear Mr Wilson:

"A patient of mine has been waiting for an MRI since April 29. Please explain to my patient why he has been waiting for four months. He is in constant pain and has great difficulty walking. Do you recommend that I tell my patient to line up and shut up? This situation is intolerable."

Minister, will you respond to Dr Dobkin?

**Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health):** I thank the honourable member for the question. Indeed I am pleased to respond to Dr Dobkin. That's exactly why we're restructuring the system and investing the money in new technology, so that we have the most modern equipment available in modern hospitals.

As you know, the government has announced we'll be tripling the number of MRIs available in the province from 12 units when we came to office to 35. Thirty-five units are more than the rest of Canada combined. We will be world leaders in the provision of MRI services in a publicly funded health care system.

I'm pleased to report that since the government made that initial announcement, we're up to about 12 of the new MRIs, so about 24 now are available in the province, and we're on track to open the rest of the MRIs over the next few months. It's good news for the patients and the reason we're restructuring is because, as I've said consistently in this House, the waiting lists for MRIs, the waiting lists for cardiac surgery, the waiting lists for hips and knees, the waiting lists for a bunch of procedures in our health care system, are far too long and that's why we need to restructure the system.

**Mr Kennedy:** Minister, you know full well the reason it's taking time to get MRIs in this province is you're only paying less than a third of the cost of operating an MRI. It costs \$400,000 a year and you're only providing \$150,000, and you pay none of the cost. Every single community that has received approval for an MRI has to raise over \$1 million. There are 24 MRIs in Buffalo alone. There is a two-day wait in Buffalo and that's what many

Canadians are reverting to because you haven't acted quickly enough.

Minister, talk to Dr Dobkin. He wants to know if you're going to make his patient just line up and shut up, or are you actually going to do something to make sure an MRI is available for that patient and he's not going to continue to wait what his hospital, Sunnybrook, says will be three to six months before he receives an MRI.

**Hon Mr Wilson:** If the honourable member wasn't so negative, perhaps he'd open up his mind and his eyes and read the Health Services Restructuring Commission's report. It indicates in the areas of Thunder Bay, in Sudbury, in Toronto, if I don't forget, three or four or five new MRIs for Toronto, in Ottawa, in each case the government is being directed to pay \$1 million for each MRI. Its direction is to the government to pay for the MRIs and we will do that, as we're doing that currently in Thunder Bay, in Sudbury, and just as soon as we can get the new capacity up and running, in Toronto.

I'd ask the honourable member to stop being so negative all the time, read all the positive stuff, because it's a very positive report: over 5,000 new nursing home beds for Metro Toronto, new MRIs across the province paid for by the taxpayers through the provincial treasury. It's good news for patients and the waiting lists are going to be the lowest they've ever been in the history of this province. Frankly, you had the opportunity to do this when you were the government a few years ago and you didn't do anything.

#### PUBLIC HEALTH

**Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre):** My question is also to the Minister of Health. On the one hand, we have your government consistently refusing to order public inquiries into environmental disasters, and on the other hand, we have Bill 152 which changes significantly the administration of public health. Bill 152 will have the effect of limiting the autonomy of local medical officers of health and making them subject to local politics. Moreover, you've removed the role of the chief medical officer of health for Ontario on issues of environmental health. Surely you want the people of Ontario to be informed through the chief medical officer of health of environmental risks to their health, certainly given your comments earlier today. Can you tell us why you put section 11 in Bill 152, removing the requirement that the chief medical officer of health keep informed of all issues related to occupational and environmental health?

**Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health):** We have not in any way decreased the responsibility of local medical officers of health or chief medical officers of health in the province. In fact, I think you'll find, because extensive consultations have occurred across the province, that there is a consensus building in the public health community that indeed the authority and mandate, a clearer and more comprehensive mandate, is being developed for the public health system.

**Mrs Boyd:** You obviously haven't read Bill 152, then. Minister, 100 years ago Henrik Ibsen wrote a play called *An Enemy of the People*. The enemy was the local doctor, who was being forced to choose between keeping his job and keeping silent or informing the townspeople that their water was contaminated. Local politicians chose to make the environment for business more comfortable while exposing the people to the risks of that contamination. As a town father in *An Enemy of the People* expressed it: "The matter at hand is not merely a scientific one. It's a complicated matter, and it has its economic as well as its technical side."

Minister, you are allowing the potential for exactly a similar situation to occur in Ontario, only this time you'll be the enemy of the people. Governments have responsibilities. Why are you trying to avoid your responsibility and allowing public health decisions to become more subject to economics and to local politics?

**Hon Mr Wilson:** I certainly disagree with the honourable member's premise in her question. I don't find anything in Bill 152 that suggests what she suggests. I don't need any lectures about the role of medical officers of public health when it comes to the purity of water in this province. I'm the fellow who has Collingwood in his riding. We're the ones who had the cryptosporidium outbreak last year. That was handled without political interference. It was handled by the local medical officer of health and the chief medical officer of health. There is nothing in Bill 152 to prevent those officials from doing their jobs to the fullest extent to protect the public.

I am proud to say today that Collingwood has, with the new plant up there, the cleanest water in Ontario. Everybody pulled together on the oars in the same direction and we solved the problem. Bill 152 will ensure that occurs in the future, just as it did in the past.

#### COMMUNITY CARE ACCESS CENTRES

**Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton North):** My question is addressed to the minister responsible for seniors. On April 1, the community care access centre for Peel began operating, one of the first in the province, I might add. In the past, many seniors in Brampton and other parts of Peel found it confusing and frustrating to find out exactly what long-term-care services were available to them. The seniors who did sort their way through the matrix of services are using the new CCAC program.

Minister, can you reassure the seniors of Peel that the CCAC will not just change the way seniors' services are delivered but will actually improve the delivery of services?

**Hon Cameron Jackson (Minister without Portfolio [Seniors Issues]):** I want to thank the member for his question and to reassure him, as well as all members of the House, about the success of the community care access centres that are operating in every corner of the province.

This one-window access for seniors is improving the delivery of service and has provided a more accountable framework in which the government can flow additional

dollars to support expanding services. Peel is no exception, where we have seen expanded service.

We have received positive feedback from the community. In fact, I received a letter from Mr James Taylor, the administrator of Westminster Court, a non-profit seniors' residence in Peel, which stated: "In the past, home care of any description was of the hit-and-miss variety. The CCACs have integrated the various services into an effective team capable of devising care packages suited to the needs of the resident."

We are very pleased that the success of community care access centres are providing patient-focused, community-based care in their homes, where they want it. The seniors and the disabled are very pleased with the development of this program.

**Mr Spina:** Peel has a pretty comfortable environment and it's become a popular destination for senior citizens, perhaps not quite like Elliot Lake, but it's popular nevertheless. A growing demand for health care services is resulting from Peel's growth in population. As a result, many of these constituents have questions about the future availability of these health care services.

Can you tell us what the government intends to do to cope with the increasing demand for these long-term-care services? How are the services like home care and physiotherapy going to be protected?

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**Hon Mr Jackson:** All members of the House are aware that in Peel they did receive part of this government's growth fund for hospitals, a part of the \$43-million commitment to recognize growth.

On the community care side it's no different. We have recognized that growth. We're the first government in Ontario's history to actually measure and provide the additional funding. In Peel recently our government announced \$11.7 million in direct long-term-care funding, of which about \$8.2 million went to the community care access centre for direct service. It will help about 4,000 seniors and disabled, and it's on top of the \$30 million in base funding.

Peel is a good example of where this government is providing the necessary funds for high-growth, complex-care-needs seniors who want to live in their homes longer and expect that care, to ensure that services are where they need them, when they need them, and are delivered by competent people who can provide the best care. This government is very proud of that record.

#### FIRE IN HAMILTON

**Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East):** My question is to the Minister of Environment. Earlier today, when questioned regarding a resolution by Hamilton-Wentworth regional council asking you to call a Plastimet inquiry, you suggested that the regional council is not the medical officer of health and that you have not heard whether there's support from the medical officer of health. Let me remind you what your Minister of Health said, that the

government would have to support an inquiry if health and other authorities added their voices.

Minister, I just spoke to Dr Marilyn James, the medical officer of health for Hamilton-Wentworth. Dr James advised me that she believes many questions need to be answered that transcend both health and environment, and that she supports the call of the region for a public inquiry.

In view of that new information, in view of what your Minister of Health committed to publicly, in view of what you have committed to publicly, will you now do the right and honourable thing and support the call for a public inquiry? The medical officer of health said she supports it as well.

**Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Environment and Energy):** A lot of things have been said with regard to the people who are calling for an inquiry into the Plastimet fire in Hamilton. An inquiry is a costly procedure. It can amount to millions of dollars, if done properly. Quite frankly, we are focusing our efforts on cleaning up the site at this time. At the present time the owner of the site has paid for those costs, but there's no guarantee that that will happen in the end. We are, of course, going after the polluter with regard to doing this.

I'd be interested in hearing from Dr James in writing as to what she might view with regard to this. As I've said in the past, we'll take her comments very seriously.

**Mr Agostino:** Minister, you have run out of excuses. You wanted the council; you had the council. Then came the firefighters, public workers, the residents, the regional council and now the medical officer of health. Are we to believe and trust you and your colleague the Minister of Health when you tell the people of Hamilton that if the MOH asks for a public inquiry you'll give it to them? Are we to believe you? If we are, then very clearly you would do the right thing today.

What are you afraid of? You talk about the cost. Have you looked at the cost to the neighbourhood? Have you looked at the cost to the firefighters? Have you looked at the cost to the city and its image and what has happened as a result of that fire? Have you looked at the cost to people who were exposed to that fire? Does that matter to you?

If you and your minister are worth their word, if you're a minister of any integrity, you will do what is right. The Minister of Health said it in Hamilton. You have said in this House that you will call one if the medical officer of health asks for one. I just spoke to the medical officer of health. She supports the call for a public inquiry.

Minister, either you call one today or you've blatantly misled the people of Hamilton, you and your colleague sitting next to you over there.

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Order. You cannot accuse the minister of blatantly misleading anything.

**Mr Agostino:** I'll withdraw that.

**Hon Mr Sterling:** Because of this member's inability to listen to the answers and to deal with the words that are used, I have some question with regard to the conveyance of a message that he might say to me with regard to what

the medical officer of health's position might or might not be.

I did not say a few minutes ago that I would call an inquiry if the medical officer of health supported it. I said that I would take what she said seriously into consideration on this issue, which I believe is the position of the Minister of Health.

This is a serious problem for the people of Hamilton. We have been dealing with the people on the ground in Hamilton. We have been providing the medical officer of health, we have been providing the fire chief, with environmental information. We are doing everything we can for the people of Hamilton.

### CHARITABLE GAMING

**Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie):** My question is for the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism. In light of your answers or non-answers to my questions this week on your government's gambling strategy, or gambling with the gambling strategy, the people of Sault Ste Marie are becoming increasingly anxious.

This summer you sent the board of directors of the Ontario Lottery Corp to Sault Ste Marie — you wouldn't come yourself — to announce another \$50 million out of the operating budget of the corporation. Is \$50 million enough to satisfy your ever-growing, insatiable appetite for gambling and charitable money? If not, how much is enough? Do you have any idea when all this becomes counterproductive?

**Hon William Saunderson (Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism):** I'm pleased to respond to the question from the member for Sault Ste Marie. First of all, he had lots of answers about small business from me this week which make sense. The only problem with him is he hates to hear good news about how much we've done for small business compared to what's been done over the last 10 years.

As far as the Ontario Lottery Corp is concerned, it is our government's intention, and I think it's our duty to the taxpayers, to maximize the revenues we possibly can get and maximize the efficiency of how all our agencies, boards and commissions are being run. We did a review of the Ontario Lottery Corp within my ministry and we declared our support for a restructuring plan that will allow for greater efficiency and productivity. I see nothing wrong with that. I see something very good about that, because our government is trying to do much better for less for the taxpayers in this province.

**Mr Martin:** He didn't answer the question, Speaker, and I'm wondering if there's anything you can do about that. He never does.

Meanwhile, speaking about reports, you also said this summer when you made this announcement that you were going to do a report. You've done a number of reports over the last year and a half on the lottery corporation, none of which you have shared with the community or the employees or anybody else who's interested in participat-

ing in some kind of mitigating plan or a plan to deal with the negative effects of your restructuring.

Will you today commit to making public the findings of this latest report to the community, to the employees and to all of us who have an interest in doing all that we can to mitigate the terrible negative results of what you're doing and calling a restructuring plan for the Ontario Lottery Corp?

**Hon Mr Saunderson:** First of all, we have communicated very well with the people in Sault Ste Marie and the lottery corporation employees. As a matter of fact, I have been to Sault Ste Marie within the last few months to visit with the mayor and the lottery corporation executive. Just recently I met with them in Toronto in my office. So for you to say that, you're quite wrong over there.

Our aim is to create accountability and efficiency in the public sector and we know there are efficiencies to be found. We have had studies done and given to us of similar operations, and we know that operation could be run more economically and better. First of all, all I can say to the member is that \$50 million is what we are going to save from our review, and we think this is wise and essential so that the taxpayers of Ontario are well served by this government. That's our goal, to do better with less

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### TOURISM INDUSTRY

**Mr Tim Hudak (Niagara South):** My question is also to the Minister for Economic Development, Trade and Tourism. In fact, in the interest of time, I think I'll put my supplementary and my question together.

Tourism is a significant employer in Ontario and a very major employer in the Niagara region. Going around this summer to the Canal Days in Port Colborne, the Marshville Heritage Festival in Wainfleet, the Friendship Festival and the Highland Games in Fort Erie, I think we saw some record crowds this summer. Seeing the Peace Bridge busier this year, and I think the Niagara Falls bridge is doing well too, what's the result? How successful has the summer season been in Ontario?

Second, if I could add the supplementary, what are your plans to make sure that this growth in tourism continues in the fall and into the winter?

**Hon William Saunderson (Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism):** I'd like to thank the member for Niagara South for his question. He asked two questions and I will give two answers.

I want to say that overall, for the benefit of the House, this summer's tourism season has been a very, very good one and it has made up for a very disappointing slow start due to bad weather.

The Niagara region has had a very exceptional year, as an example. Visits to the Niagara Falls region are up 19% over the previous year and the traffic counts at Queen Victoria Park showed an increase of 670,000 cars over last year. That's a big, big increase.

We have registered over 250,000 visits by Americans so far this year, and overnight stays have increased by

27%. This has brought \$195 million into the province and that's a \$51 million increase over the previous year. Overseas visitors to Canada have increased by 14% and many of these people have chosen to come to Ontario.

I would just like to add, on the supplementary, at this stage of the game —

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Thank you. New question, unless you want to go —

**Mr Hudak:** Mr Speaker, the minister didn't have a chance to answer the second part of my question.

**The Speaker:** Okay then, supplementary.

**Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon):** You already went to supplementary, Speaker.

**The Speaker:** I've got to tell you, he said he has his question and supp at the first.

**Mr Pouliot:** He placed his bet. He can't get his money back.

**The Speaker:** Holy smokes, take it easy. Hold on. He can say he's asking his question and supp, but he always gets a supp. The member for Niagara South.

**Mr Hudak:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. It's certainly good news for all members of the House from the minister today. The important question is, how can we continue this trend of growth in tourism for the people of Niagara South and for the rest of Ontario through the fall and the winter seasons?

**Hon Mr Saunderson:** I'm pleased to respond to the supplementary. We're doing two things which are very important. We've launched an aggressive domestic advertising campaign to promote get-away vacations in Ontario for Ontarians and for those who live in border states. Half-page newspaper ads have appeared in many local newspapers and community newspapers. Thirty-second television commercials are airing throughout Ontario at the present time. The 800 Ontario consumer travel information line has handled a record 6,500 calls in one day this summer, due in part to this exciting advertising campaign.

The second thing is that, in the border states, Ontario will be advertised weekly this fall and winter in a series of newspaper ads in the Sunday travel sections of daily newspapers and magazines in those areas. Also, there will be television commercials. Ontario Tourism will be co-ordinating familiarization tours through the fall and winter for US tour operators and a series of print ads in the United States will also promote travel to Ontario this fall and winter.

I'm happy to say that will be presenting —

**The Speaker:** Thank you. Petitions.

## PETITIONS

### HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

**Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William):** To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the undersigned residents living in the city of Thunder Bay in northwestern Ontario are in need of a new regional acute care hospital situated in the city of Thunder Bay to provide the said residents with quality health care services in a modern and up-to-date acute care hospital; and

"Whereas the partial renovation and restructuring of the existing Port Arthur General Hospital, a 65-year-old outdated and antiquated hospital building, proposed by the health services review commission and the Ministry of Health for the province of Ontario will not be suitable, adequate or proper to provide such quality health care services to the said residents; and

"Whereas the undersigned residents endorse and support the Thunder Bay Regional Hospital and the trustees of the hospital board and their vision of a new centrally located hospital to serve the northwestern Ontario region;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario to reverse the decision and direction of the health services review commission and the Minister of Health to have all acute care services for the city of Thunder Bay and northwestern Ontario region delivered from the renovated and restructured site of Port Arthur General Hospital and to endorse and approve capital funding to build a new centrally located acute care hospital in the city of Thunder Bay."

This is signed by another 391 constituents in my riding, and I have affixed my signature as well.

## COURT DECISION

**Mr Bob Wood (London South):** I have a petition signed by 109 people. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the courts have ruled that women have the lawful right to go topless in public; and

"Whereas the Liberal government of Canada has the power to change the Criminal Code to reinstate such public nudity as an offence;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the government of Ontario to pass a bill empowering municipalities to enact bylaws governing dress code and to continue to urge the government of Canada to pass legislation to reinstate such partial nudity as an offence."

## GASOLINE PRICES

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** I have a petition from a number of people in Ontario concerned about gas prices.

"Whereas since Mike Harris took office gasoline prices have increased on an average of a dramatic 12 cents a litre, which is over 50 cents a gallon; and

"Whereas this increase in the price of gasoline has outpaced the rate of inflation by a rate that is totally unacceptable to all consumers in this province because it is unfair and directly affects their ability to purchase other consumer goods; and

"Whereas Premier Mike Harris and ministers within the cabinet of his government while in opposition expressed grave concern for gas price gouging and asked the government of the day to take action; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government could take action under Ontario law and pass predatory gas pricing legislation which would protect consumers but instead seems intent on looking after the interests of big oil companies;

"We, the undersigned, petition Premier Harris and the government of Ontario to eliminate gas price fixing and prevent the oil companies from gouging the public on an essential and vital product."

I affix my signature to this petition, as I am in full agreement with its contents.

### COURT DECISION

**Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre):** I have a petition from some 24 people in my riding objecting to topless women in public, which reads as follows:

"We are offended that women are allowed to go topless in public. It is our right to be able to walk the streets without fear of being confronted with this immoral behaviour and demand that this right be protected."

I don't agree with this petition, but it is my obligation as a member to present it to this place, and so I will do so.

**Mr Ted Arnott (Wellington):** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the Court of Appeal has ruled in favour of the lawful right to go topless in public; and

"Whereas the Liberal government of Canada has the legislative authority to restrict going topless in public places; and

"Whereas sections 173 and 174 of the Criminal Code relating to public nudity be clarified to provide better protection of community standards;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the province of Ontario to continue to urge the government of Canada to clarify legislation on going topless in public places."

I support this petition and have affixed my signature.

### STANDING ORDERS REFORM

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** I have another petition, this from a number of people concerned about the standing orders changes:

"Whereas the people of Ontario want rigorous discussion on legislation dealing with public policy issues like health care, education and care for seniors; and

"Whereas many people in Ontario believe that the Mike Harris government is moving too quickly and recklessly, creating havoc with the provision of quality health care, quality education, and adversely affecting seniors; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government now wishes to change the rules of the Ontario Legislature, which would allow the government to ram legislation through more

quickly and have less accountability to the public and the media through exercises such as question period; and

"Whereas Mike Harris and Ernie Eves, when they were in opposition, defended the rights of the opposition and used the rules to their full advantage when they believed it was necessary to slow down the passage of controversial legislation; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government now wishes to reduce the amount of time that MPPs will have to debate the important issues of the day; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government, through its proposed rule changes, is attempting to diminish the role of elected members of the Legislative Assembly who are accountable to the people who elect them, and instead concentrate power in the Premier's office in the hands of people who are not elected officials;

"We, the undersigned, call upon Mike Harris to reject these proposed draconian rule changes and restore rules which promote rigorous debate on contentious issues and hold the government accountable to the people of Ontario."

I am prepared to affix my signature to this petition, as I'm in full agreement with its contents.

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### HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

**Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre):** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas over half the people in Ontario are women;

"Only 5% of the money spent on medical research goes to research in women's health;

"Women have special medical needs since their bodies are not the same as men's;

"Women's College is the only hospital in Ontario with a primary mandate giving priority to research and treatment dedicated to women's health needs;

"The World Health Organization has named Women's College Hospital as the sole collaborating centre for women's health for both North and South America;

"Without Women's College Hospital, the women of Ontario and of the world will lose a health resource that will not be duplicated elsewhere;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to ensure the continuance, independence, women-centred focus and accessible downtown location of the one hospital most crucial to the future of women's health."

I am proud to affix my signature to this petition.

### COURT DECISION

**Mr Tony Clement (Brampton South):** I too have a petition relating to the issue of toplessness in Ontario arising from the citizens of Brampton, and in particular Bramalea Baptist Church.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario Court of Appeal has ruled that women have the lawful right to appear topless in public; and

"Whereas the Liberal government of Canada has the power to change the Criminal Code to reinstate such public nudity as an offence;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the government of Ontario to continue to urge the government of Canada to pass legislation to ban going topless in public places."

I'm happy as well to affix my signature to this petition.

#### CHARITABLE GAMING

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** I have a petition which actually comes from a number of people residing in Thunder Bay and it reads as follows:

"Professing that our world belongs to God and believing that governments are called to secure justice for all, with prejudice towards none and with compassion for the weak and powerless;

"We, the undersigned, urge you, our civic leaders, to oppose and resist the spread of gambling into our area. Specifically, we ask you to resist all efforts to install video lottery terminals here and oppose the operation of local or regional charity casinos."

As I say, these are all people from Thunder Bay and the surrounding area who have signed this. I affix my signature because I'm in complete agreement with this petition.

#### ORDERS OF THE DAY

##### TIME ALLOCATION

**Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Government House Leader):** I move that pursuant to standing order 46 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 142, An Act to revise the law related to Social Assistance by enacting the Ontario Works Act and the Ontario Disability Support Program Act, by repealing the Family Benefits Act, the Vocational Rehabilitation Services Act and the General Welfare Assistance Act and by amending several other Statutes, when Bill 142 is next called as a government order, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill without further debate or amendment, and at such time the bill shall be referred to the standing committee on social development;

That the standing committee on social development shall be authorized to meet to consider the bill for two days at its regularly scheduled meeting times during the week of September 29, 1997;

That the standing committee shall be further authorized to meet to consider the bill for the purposes of conducting

public hearings for four days during the first week of the next recess;

That all amendments shall be filed with the clerk of the committee by 5 pm on the fifth calendar day following the final day of public hearings on the bill;

That the standing committee shall be further authorized to meet for two days during the next recess for clause-by-clause consideration of the bill and that the committee shall be authorized to meet beyond its normal hour of adjournment on the second day until completion of clause-by-clause consideration. At 5 pm on the second day of clause-by-clause consideration, those amendments which have not yet been moved shall be deemed to have been moved, and the Chair of the committee shall interrupt the proceedings and shall, without further debate or amendment, put every question necessary to dispose of all remaining sections of the bill and any amendments thereto. Any divisions required shall be deferred until all remaining questions have been put and shall be taken in succession with one 20-minute waiting period allowed pursuant to standing order 127(a);

That the committee shall report the bill to the House on the first available day following completion of clause-by-clause consideration that reports from committees may be received. In the event that the committee fails to report the bill on the date provided, the bill shall be deemed to be passed by the committee and shall be deemed to be reported to and received by the House;

That upon receiving the report of the standing committee on social development, the Speaker shall put the question for adoption of the report forthwith, and at such time the bill shall be ordered for third reading;

That one sessional day shall be allotted to the third reading stage of the bill. At 5:45 pm or 9:15 pm as the case may be on such day, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and shall put every question necessary to dispose of this stage of the bill without further debate or amendment;

That in the case of any division relating to any proceeding on the bill, the division bell shall be limited to five minutes.

Mr Speaker, can I indicate first of all that I will be sharing my time with the member for Chatham-Kent, Mr Carroll, the member for High Park-Swansea, Mr Shea, and the member for Mississauga South, Mrs Marland?

With that, I would say that we have had a good debate on Bill 142 covering three days; about eight and a half hours of time. It is critical that we proceed with the bill and entertain it at committee, have hearings, allow people to speak to it and then be able to proceed with the bill.

It is critical because it does assist people to get off welfare and to get on with their lives, and it does create an income-support program to meet the unique needs of people with disabilities. For many years, people with disabilities have been on the welfare system in terms of income support. This government indicated during the last election that this was not an appropriate place for people with disabilities to be, that their needs are separate and

distinct and that they should be recognized in that light. So those are two of the key circumstances behind the bill.

The reality the government faces today is that while we've had a very successful and I think thorough debate, as is typical over the last year or so there is no end in sight to the debate. It's difficult to get a reading from the opposition members in terms of when the debate might wrap up. It's impossible, and we know that without bringing in this type of motion we would not be able to get on with the public hearings, not be able to get on with implementing the bill and not be able to get on to the kind of reform this government promised the people of Ontario during the last election.

I might say that the kind of reform we promised is starting to take hold. Of course, this government had introduced other measures before this bill, and as a result I am happy to be here to indicate that the reforms are paying off and that we are seeing fewer and fewer people on welfare today.

There is a tragedy, certainly, associated with the welfare story in the province of Ontario. In 1985, for example, there were fewer than 500,000 people on welfare. That's 500,000 people too many, but nevertheless about 475,000 people, to be precise. Today we have well over one million people on the welfare system. Indeed, in 1995 there were over 1.3 million people, almost three times the number of people on welfare in 1985 as there were in 1985. Over the course of 10 years the number of people on welfare in Ontario had just about tripled.

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It's perhaps not too surprising that during the period 1990-95, with the recession and the problems faced in the economy, the number of people on welfare rose. Indeed, during that period of time there was about a 73% increase in the number of people on welfare in the province.

What is amazing to most people I talk to about the whole welfare situation is that during the boom years in the 1980s — 1987, 1988, 1989, when the economy was growing, when economic growth was 5%, 6% — even during those years, amazingly enough, the number of people on welfare was going up. Every year there was an increase in the number of people on welfare, even during those enormously successful times worldwide. Of course, the economy not only in Canada but in the United States and the global economy was going along at an excellent pace, and yet right here in Ontario the number of people on welfare was increasing. So the case for reform is quite overwhelming.

I might say that while, for example, during the period 1985-90 the caseload on welfare increased by some 25%, the cost to the taxpayers of delivering welfare in the province of Ontario went up by some 76%. What happened during those years was not only that the number of people on welfare increased, but the average cost of each person on welfare was going up at an even higher rate. The government of that day was increasing the benefits well above and beyond what was happening anywhere else in Canada, or indeed anywhere else in the world. I guess the feeling at that point was that the money is flow-

ing in, so therefore the government should take the taxpayers' money and flow it right back out again. It flowed out in prodigious quantities through to the welfare system, a 76% increase in the cost of welfare to the province in just five short years. The expenditure in 1995 was almost \$7 billion. The expenditure in 1985 had been about \$1.5 billion; \$1.5 billion in 1985 rose to almost \$7 billion in 1995.

Since this government has come to power and has brought in reforms to the system, the numbers of people on the welfare system have gone down. The cost has gone down by some 1.3 million people — sorry, by 1.3 million dollars. Did I say "million"? It's \$1.3 billion. It's such a large amount of money that it's hard to get your mind around: a reduction of \$1.3 billion in welfare costs since this government has taken action, and well over —

**Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt):** On a point of order, Madam Speaker: The minister is making what I think is a significant statement, and I think there should be a quorum of Tory members to hear it.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs Marion Boyd):** Would you check if there is a quorum.

**Clerk Assistant (Ms Deborah Deller):** A quorum is not present, Speaker.

*The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.*

**Clerk Assistant:** A quorum is now present, Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Government House leader.

**Hon David Johnson:** I thank my colleague and the former Treasurer of the province of Ontario, because at this point, since I've just started back into the debate, I can say it has just been determined today that 9,000 more people left the welfare system in August; 219,000 have stopped relying on the welfare system since we took office in 1995. The good news is that of course the vast majority of them are finding employment opportunities in the province of Ontario. That's what this government is all about: finding a way to encourage job growth in the province by reducing taxes, by cutting the red tape, by reforming the workers' compensation system, so many different initiatives that this government has taken. Now employment is up. Employment is higher than at any time in the history of the province of Ontario.

*Applause.*

**Hon David Johnson:** I've got my own cheering section.

More and more people at work, fewer and fewer people unemployed, fewer and fewer people on the welfare system: That's what we said we'd do in 1995, and indeed that's what we're doing.

That speaks to this particular bill, Bill 142, which brings in further amendments to the welfare system, which encourages more and more people to get on with training, more and more people to be involved in the Ontario Works program, which I might say is becoming enormously successful. More and more people — I'm just looking for the number of people involved — 43,000 people have participated in one of the activities of the Ontario Works program in 40 communities in the province of Ontario.

We hear from time to time that Ontario Works, which was originally known as workfare, is not working, that it's a sham, that there's nothing you can do about the welfare system, that no reform is ever possible. Previous governments have looked at it and they've thrown up their hands and said there's nothing they can do. But we said, "Yes, there is." During the last election we said: "Yes, there is. We can bring in the reforms. We can improve the economy. We can get people back to work. We can get people off the welfare system." That's exactly what we've done: 43,000 people participating in the Ontario Works program in 40 communities, an increase of about 20% from the previous month. The Ontario Works program is growing. It's becoming more and more successful and will continue to do so.

Given that sort of history, given that sort of background, we need to get on with the reform. We have had the three days of debate on this bill in this House. We will have committee time. We will have further debate at third reading. But I have every confidence that the bill, through the committee process, will again improve the welfare system, again allow more and more people to find opportunities in the workforce, encourage them to find opportunities.

There may be a few people who are discouraged too from using the system in a fraudulent way. That may be a component of this. I think all of us realize that to some degree fraud has crept into the component. Certainly the police have laid charges in various cases. We've all read about them. They continue to happen. I think the kind of reforms we're bringing in discourage people from misusing the system in that regard. So that's another component.

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Not only are more people getting back to work, but people are saying: "Hey, this government is serious. This government means business about this welfare system, and if my intention is to abuse the system, I might get caught now. Here's a government that actually might" — and I can tell them one that will — "take the welfare system seriously and will catch those who are abusing it and discourage those who are abusing it, so that the taxpayers can get the best value for their money." That's exactly what we need to do.

With those remarks, I will ask that we all support this bill, because it's certainly my impression that all three parties in this House believe the welfare system can be improved. I hope we would all get behind the positive aspects of this bill and have a good debate during the committee process and bring forward amendments. There's never been a bill in the history of this House that's perfect. I'm sure there will be some amendments to this bill. But let's take this welfare situation seriously. Let's all contribute, have a good debate, bring it back to this House, and move on.

Madam Speaker, I've been informed that my time is going to be shared by the member for York-Mackenzie, Mr Klees, rather than the member for High Park-Swansea, if that'll be just noted.

**Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma):** That's not fair. I came back to hear the member for High Park-Swansea.

**Hon David Johnson:** The member for High Park-Swansea is right here and I'm sure he'll be more than happy to talk to you.

Those are my remarks. I think this is a great bill. It's time to get on with it. I hope we can.

**Mr Jack Carroll (Chatham-Kent):** It's my pleasure to rise today and participate in the debate and to address some comments to all my opposition friends sitting across the way, and to members of the third party who are here today to hear the debate on this issue.

We have debated Bill 142 for eight hours and 23 minutes, and in all probability 108 hours and 23 minutes wouldn't have been considered enough time by the opposition.

It was interesting. On Tuesday there was a great call from the members opposite for immediate passage of a resolution on high gas prices — immediately, no debate, pass it immediately. We had an opportunity on Wednesday to introduce such a resolution and we debated it for a couple of hours.

The members of the third party, consistent as they are, said, "Okay, we want to vote, we want to pass it right away." The members of the opposition refused to vote on it — a resolution we all agreed on, and the government and the members of the third party said, "Let's pass it," but the Liberals, for some reason or other, decided, "No, we don't want to vote on this resolution." So it's not so much about time in this place; it has more to do with political opportunism.

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** On a point of order, Madam Speaker: I know the member well and I know he would not want to mislead the House. The problem is that what he is saying could be construed as misleading the House, and I wouldn't want him to do that.

As he knows, we are eager to have that resolution he made reference to on gas prices dealt with, and had hoped it was dealt with this afternoon and we could debate it, get all our speakers on and vote on it, but the government refused to call it this afternoon. I'm sorry about that.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, member for St Catharines. It's not a point of order. However, I would remind the member to avoid provoking the opposition.

**Mr Carroll:** Far be it from me to provoke the opposition. It is interesting, on that same point, though, that the member for St Catharines today, I recall, presented a petition relative to high gas prices. So it's interesting, what happens in here.

Since we've started on this whole process and all the things we've done in this House, the opposition has opposed things as wonderful as tax cuts, so it's not surprising they would also be opposing Bill 142.

Let me refresh people's minds a little bit about what happens when governments don't act. Our government House leader gave some of these numbers. I would like to repeat them because I think they bear repeating. When governments don't act on critical issues, as the last two governments didn't, we see welfare rolls rise from

475,000 people to 1.3 million, a tripling of the welfare rolls in a 10-year period. In that same period of time, the amount of money the taxpayers of Ontario spent on welfare went from \$1.4 billion to \$6.7 billion.

That's what happens when governments don't act: We end up with 1.3 million people — that's almost 11% of the population of this great province — trapped in a welfare system. That's what happens when governments don't act. That's why we as a government believe we must get on with governing the province.

The other comment we hear from the opposition is that we haven't consulted enough, that we need to consult more, and for that reason we need to extend the debate in the House and we need to have long hearings. I'd just like to remind the House about some of the people we did consult with regarding the Ontario disability support plan. We consulted the good people from Goodwill. We consulted the March of Dimes, the Ontario Association for Community Living, the Canadian National Institute for the Blind, the Canadian Hearing Society, AIDS Action Now, People with AIDS Foundation, the Canadian Mental Health Association, Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario, the Income Maintenance Group, the Ontario schizophrenia association, Hemophilia Ontario, Ontario Council on Alternative Business. We did consult extensively. That is where the Ontario disability support plan came from.

In addition to that, the 1992 Mainstream report, which was a federal-provincial report, recognized that people with disabilities require special disability-related supports which accommodate and respect their differences. That is precisely what we are doing with Bill 142.

More recently, the federal Scott task force report, *The Will to Act*, which had considerable consumer involvement, recommended that vocational rehab programs be refocused to help prepare people to go to work, exactly what we're doing with Bill 142. These reports go back to 1992. There are several other reports that say the same thing. So this is difficult territory that it is time to move ahead on.

At some point in time governments have to go ahead and govern. They cannot forever sit and have reports, have studies and think about things. They are called upon the taxpayers to govern.

**Mr Wildman:** Nobody has accused you of thinking too much.

**The Acting Speaker:** Member for Algoma, I think you might want to withdraw that.

**Mr Wildman:** No. I haven't accused him of thinking too much.

**Mr Carroll:** Thank you, Madam Chair, that's obviously not provocation.

A former member of this House who sat I believe in a chair right behind me, Gary Malkowski, from the Canadian Hearing Society — here are his comments about what Minister Ecker is doing with Bill 142, the Ontario disability support plan part of it:

"I wish to congratulate you, Minister, for showing the most positive kind of announcement that we've had in

some time, including previous governments" — one of which he was part of — "so I'd like to offer my congratulations on this and I hope that this does provide an opportunity for breaking down barriers to employment." Obviously a ringing endorsement of the need to do what Bill 142 does.

Peter McGrath from the Ottawa-Carleton Independent Living Centre, in a telephone interview: "It's a fundamental shift in the way the government has been thinking about people with disabilities. Instead of saying we're going to be taking care of you, we're saying we recognize you have a role to play."

An editorial in the Sudbury Star: "We say, if implemented, these changes will help disabled people gain a measure of independence."

Obviously all ringing endorsements, not necessarily from friends of our government, of what Bill 142 is going to accomplish for people with disabilities.

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Regarding the Ontario Works part of Bill 142, I've already quoted the caseload numbers and the cost of welfare, where we've tripled the caseload from 400,000 to 1.3 million people in the 10 years the Liberals and the NDP were in government, where the cost has gone from \$1.4 billion to \$6.7 billion. I've already quoted those numbers.

Obviously that system does not serve anybody well. We all are aware of the ravages of being trapped in the welfare system. There is no way out of the cycle of poverty other than through work. The welfare system, no matter how wealthy it might be, how well it might treat people, will never lead to prosperity. We must change the system so that it's geared towards work. That's what we're doing with Bill 142.

I'd like to read some comments. The member for Windsor-Riverside speaks often of the terrible travesty of the Wisconsin experiment.

**Interjection:** There is no member for Windsor-Riverside.

**Mr Carroll:** I'm sorry: the member for Windsor-Sandwich. She isn't present with us today, so I forgot her riding.

**Interjection:** We can't say that.

**Mr Carroll:** I can't say that.

She talks about the travesty of the Wisconsin experiment. I would recommend to her and to all members of the House that they buy a copy of last week's Saturday New York Times and read the story about the tremendous success and the early successes of the Wisconsin program on workfare. I'd also like to quote from some again independent sources and their comments about our program.

Mayor Deb Shewfelt from the town of Goderich: "I feel that this program is certainly a 'win-win' situation for all involved and definitely a benefit for the community."

Participant Peggy DeGraw: This lady is from my area of the province, down in Blenheim. She's a participant in the program. Her comment is, "I don't think there are a lot of programs out there that help people the way this one does," meaning Ontario Works.

The warden of Renfrew county, David Stewart: "It's not just general welfare. Ontario Works is a new breed of cat for this province and, indeed, Renfrew county.... It's the first step in a new vision of social assistance in the province, one that respects people's dignity, enhances their self-esteem, and fosters independence, self-reliance, and two-way community contribution and participation."

Again, ringing endorsements of the need for and the effectiveness of the Ontario Works program and Bill 142.

As I wrap up my remarks, the members of the opposition have a job to do. Their job, of course, is to oppose. I appreciate that that job is to oppose. We in the government have a job to do. Our job is to govern the province and to lead to a better Ontario. I believe that with the debate we've had so far, we have arrived at a balance where they've had an opportunity to oppose. We now require the opportunity to go ahead with the legislative process so we can pass the bill so we can get on with the job we were elected to do: governing the province so that the future is much better for all involved. Especially for people with disabilities and people who are on welfare, the future is much better than the past.

**Mr Frank Klees (York-Mackenzie):** I'm pleased to join with my colleague in support of the motion before us. At issue today is the fact that the government wants to get on with implementation of the contents of this bill.

No doubt we're going to hear some objections to the basis on which we're proposing that this matter be dealt with: that we deal with this in the House today, that as a result of this motion before us we will be moving this bill on to public hearings. The result of this will be that this bill now go to committee for two days, and subsequently to public hearings. That surely is in the best interests of the people of Ontario, who depend on us to move forward with the reforms we've committed to them, who look forward to participating, for example, in the Ontario Works strategy that this legislation will allow us to implement fully.

Particularly for members of the opposition, who rightfully call on us to have consultation, to open up the legislation for further consideration, we think this should be a welcome initiative on the part of the government to move it quickly out of here into the committee so we can get on with the work of further debating some of the details of the legislation. We then would look forward to bringing this bill back to the House for third reading and then on to implementation.

Why is it imperative that we move this bill forward? It's not, as perhaps some would suggest, that we don't want to give time for further debate, but I have to say that unfortunately much of the debate I've heard over the last few days on this bill in this House has been so much rhetoric. Clearly all members of the House should be welcoming an opportunity to finally move forward with reform of our welfare system that all parties of all governments — I think the honourable member for Beaches-Woodbine, who is looking at me somewhat quizzically, will recall the statement of her former leader, the Honourable Premier Robert Rae.

**Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine):** On a point of order, Madam Speaker: Actually, in honour of the presence of the member for Brantford, I would like you to ascertain whether or not there is a quorum.

**The Acting Speaker:** Clerk, would you ascertain whether there is a quorum.

**Clerk Assistant:** A quorum is not present, Speaker.

*The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.*

**Clerk Assistant:** A quorum is now present, Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** The member for York-Mackenzie.

**Mr Klees:** I would join with the member for Beaches-Woodbine to welcome the member for Brantford to the Legislature this afternoon. It's good to have him with us. It's not often that a member has a quorum call done in his honour, so once again the member for Brantford has special recognition in this House that is certainly due him.

Before that quorum call, I was about to quote the former Premier, Bob Rae, who the Speaker will recall made the following statement. He said, "It doesn't make sense to pay people to sit at home."

Although we have many philosophical differences with the former Premier, in this particular case, on this particular point, we certainly think alike. I don't believe for one minute that the former Premier's remarks were made out of a spirit of meanness. I don't believe for one minute that the comments he made himself on a number of occasions about the need to reform the welfare system were out of a sense of not caring for those people who find themselves dependent on the welfare system of this province. To the contrary, I believe very strongly that the former Premier cared very much, and that is what motivated his remarks.

**Mr Bradley:** What did he say?

**Mr Klees:** If you had been in the House, member for St Catharines, you would have heard what he said.

**Mr Bradley:** I was listening out there.

**Mr Klees:** For your benefit, I'll say it again. He said it doesn't make sense to pay people to sit at home, and I think he said that because he knows, as all members of this House know, that the most important thing for people in our society today is to believe and to know that they are contributing in a meaningful way to the world around them, and if they have children it is important for them to know that they are caring and providing for their children in the best possible way. So for this province and many jurisdictions across the country and around the world over time to have allowed a system to develop that robs people of self-esteem and of the opportunity to provide for themselves is unconscionable. Unfortunately very few governments, very few jurisdictions, have taken it upon themselves to make the tough decisions that will once again return people to an opportunity to help themselves.

1550

People will remember well that during the last provincial election the Premier, the then leader of the third party, made the comment that it is time we gave people a hand up, not just a handout. The bill that is before us, Bill 142, does that more than any other initiative of any government

in any jurisdiction in this country. Once and for all it puts forward not only an opportunity for us in this province to establish the Ontario Works strategy, but it also builds into the program disincentives for people to abuse the welfare system we have, which over time has grown to be the richest in the country. Even with the reduction of 20% in benefits that our government brought forward, this province is still paying at the rate of 10% above the average of all other provinces in this country. Coupled with that, we were prepared to allow people to earn back without any penalty the difference between the old rates and the new rates.

I am told by our front-line workers in the field today that the very option to allow people to earn back some of their benefits is in itself an incentive to people. I had a meeting in my constituency office this morning with a social worker who expressed his welcome of this legislation because he feels in his heart of hearts that it is precisely what he as a social worker needs to help encourage the people he deals with on a daily basis to help themselves and to become self-sufficient. I might also say that this individual is not only a social worker but he is also —

**Ms Lankin:** We're talking about time allocation.

**Mr Klees:** Yes, I am talking about the time allocation. It is important, to the member for Beaches-Woodbine, that we move this bill forward for these reasons. In the context of the debate I know what I'll hear: that we should be taking another three or four weeks to debate this legislation in this chamber. My contention is that we need to move this legislation and other legislation out of this place so that we can go to the public, get some meaningful input and then get on with the implementation throughout the province where it can really help people.

As I was saying earlier about this individual I met with this morning, not only is he a social worker but he also happens to be president of the CUPE local, and as the president of the CUPE local he had no reservations in endorsing the Ontario Works program that we are bringing forward. I have asked him to participate with me in an initiative within our own constituency to share the benefits of what Ontario Works will do for the people he is serving. I think that in itself is a strong endorsement, as people take the time to get below the rhetoric and below the partisan bickering about what we are trying to do for people in this province. When we take a look at the details of this program, I think then we are finally able to come together and say, "Let's get on with it. Let's do what has to be done. Let's bring people together and move Ontario forward in the area of reform of our welfare system."

One of the aspects of the underlying bill that I believe is a clarion call to the people of Ontario that this government once again is following through on the promises that were made during an election campaign two years ago, where we promised we would reform the welfare system of this province and give people an opportunity to once again become active in their community, that we would give them a hand up rather than a handout, is the Ontario Works proposal that was announced almost two years ago now by this government.

There have been critics of that program, and interestingly enough, on the one hand in this House we constantly hear the criticism that this government is moving too quickly; in this particular case, when it benefits the debate, we are accused of moving too slowly. Let me state for the record why we are not moving slowly but methodically. We believe that the Ontario Works program that we are bringing to this province is so critically important to the lives it will touch that we cannot simply take a program from some other jurisdiction and try to implement it here in Ontario. A very specific decision was made that we would develop an Ontario Works program, a work-for-welfare program, here in Ontario, made in Ontario for Ontarians, so we took the time to consult with people across the province.

1600

We have taken the time not only to consult on the broader principles of what that program should consist of, but we have also said to the various jurisdictions across the province that we would allow them and ask them to develop specific business plans that will set out how the Ontario Works program would be implemented in their region. That allows people across the province, where there are regional differences, to incorporate into their business plans the unique aspects of their particular regions. We know there are differences between northern Ontario and southwestern Ontario and eastern Ontario and certainly the greater Toronto area. So we have been consulting, negotiating with and looking for various areas of the province to deliver to us their specific business plans.

As in any business plan, it takes time if it is done right, and once the business plan is approved and we decide to implement it, it takes time for the implementation of that business plan, so we are not frustrated by the numbers. The latest numbers say I believe that 41,000 people across the province are now actively participating in some form of the Ontario Works program. I might say, and I think it is important for us to recognize, that the 41,000 come out of an available employable welfare caseload of approximately 300,000 to 350,000 people. So we have to realize that with the eligibility component we're looking at about a 10% participation factor at this very early stage, realizing that in jurisdictions such as Metropolitan Toronto and Ottawa-Carleton, where the highest concentrations of welfare loads across the province are, those business plans are not even at the point of implementation yet. Given the degree of participation and given the stage we're at in this province, we consider that we have done extremely well in a responsible way, in a way that is truly benefiting the people for whom this program is designed.

While it may sound interesting, while it may be politically expedient for the debate to be carried on in a tone of criticism, let me be very clear that as a government we're very proud of the work that has been done in Ontario Works to this point, and we are even more proud of the degree of support that is being shown across the province from people who are not only behind the creation of the business plans but who are the participants in the program and who are our front-line workers, who see their role

substantially changed from what the role of a social worker has been in the past.

They are seeing themselves as employment centres. They're seeing themselves as individuals who not only should be there to help people find a way to claim on the system but, more important, see themselves as a way to help people transition back into the workforce. What's particularly welcoming to them is that they have a program to work with that will help people overcome the many barriers that are now in place and are unfortunately keeping people from moving into the workforce.

I'd like to take a minute and just read a couple of comments that have appeared in the public press over the last number of weeks from people around the province. Because my friend from Brantford is in the Legislature this afternoon —

**Ms Lankin:** On a point of order, Madam Speaker: Just following up on that, I think again in celebration of the fact that the member for Brantford is here, the government should keep a quorum in the House.

**The Acting Speaker:** Clerk, would you check to see if a quorum is present.

**Clerk Assistant:** A quorum is present, Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Please continue, member for York-Mackenzie.

**Mr Klees:** Thank you. I'd like to read from the Brantford Expositor, April 4: "Duncan Cuvelier's career as a self-employed drywaller ended one and a half years ago after a knee injury. While on welfare, the 38-year-old started courses at an adult employment centre, but it closed before he finished. Now he sees workfare as a path to training as a child and youth care worker. 'I think it's good,' he said. 'A lot of people live on welfare all their lives...now they'll have to participate in this.'"

This wasn't being said in a negative way. This comment was being made in a very positive way by someone who is in the system now and sees this as benefiting him.

In honour of the Speaker who was in the chair just before I glanced up, I thought it might be appropriate to read from the London Free Press. As reported in the London Free Press, participant Barry Meredith was "quite content to do nothing and collect free money. Then his daughter was born and 'something clicked inside,' he said. Now he volunteers as a maintenance worker...and he loves it.... Given a choice, he'd like to find a job just like his community placement."

I think the evidence is overwhelming that people from across this province welcome the opportunity to participate in a meaningful program that will help them get back to work. That is what Ontario Works is designed to do, that is what Ontario Works will do, and moving this bill through this House, by moving this bill quickly into committee and having some additional public hearings on this piece of legislation will allow us then to get to the point where we can implement the full Ontario Works program, carry it out across the province and also implement some of the reforms we're proposing for the welfare system in this province.

I think it's important that we all are brought back to first principles as we debate this bill. That is that —

**Ms Lankin:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I was wondering if you would ascertain whether or not there is a quorum.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson):** Is there a quorum?

**Clerk at the Table (Mr Todd Decker):** A quorum is not present, Speaker.

*The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.*

**Clerk at the Table:** A quorum is now present, Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** The Chair recognizes the member for York-Mackenzie.

**Mr Klees:** I appreciate the member for Beaches-Woodbine ensuring that I have an appropriate audience for this debate.

I would like to just draw to the attention of this House that another reason why it's so important that we get on with the implementation of this legislation is that there are a number of initiatives that this legislation will allow us to implement in the area of fraud control. I'll just refer to a number of those areas that I think the people of this province have been looking for any government to have the courage to implement and we look forward to doing that without further delay.

Under this legislation, people convicted of welfare fraud would be ineligible for benefits for a three-month period for a first offence and six months for subsequent offences. I think there's no doubt in anyone's mind that the taxpayer dollars that are being used to fund our welfare system deserve to be well-administered and deserve to have good stewardship behind them.

It is not good stewardship when we allow people in the province to defraud the taxpayer of funds that should be going to those people who are in need. One of the reasons there are many people — and we won't deny this there are people in the province who have need and who on some occasions are not being given the kind of support they deserve. That's not because we're not spending enough money on welfare. It's not because we're not spending enough money on any of the social benefits that we're providing this province. It is not a function of how much money we're spending. It's whether we're spending it in the most prudent way and whether we're able to target those dollars to those people who need our support most. Some of the fraud-prevention initiatives that are contained in this legislation will help us to address that.

One further initiative this legislation will allow us to pursue is the utilization of biometrics. Much has been said about that. People have referred to that in debate, trying to discredit what we're trying to do in this area to prevent fraud, by suggesting that people are going to be treated as criminals, that we want to fingerprint them.

I want to make it very clear that is not what we're discussing. There are many ways we can use scientific and new technology that will help us prevent fraud. Biometric finger-scanning is just one way we believe we can use

new technology to ensure that taxpayers' dollars are used much more wisely.

There is a health care club in Toronto, I believe it's Mayfair, where in order to gain access you have to put your finger on a screening device and that gets you through the door. That's biometric finger-scanning. These are not criminals. These are not people who are being held in low esteem or being discredited. These are people who belong to a club, who believe it is appropriate to safeguard their premises and who believe the new technology is in their best interests.

We're just simply saying we believe it's incumbent upon this government to use the latest technology available to us in the best interest of taxpayers so that we can ensure again that every dollar that is focused through this ministry is being used to the benefit of the people who need our support.

There are a number of areas of this legislation that deal with the disabled and my colleague from Mississauga South, I believe, is going to address the Legislature on those issues. I am going to close off my remarks by simply reiterating the fact that I believe it not only is prudent for us after the hours of debate that we have had on this proposed legislation already in this House but that it is ultimately important that we comply with the wishes of the member for Beaches-Woodbine that we get additional consultation and input into this bill. The best way we can do that is to move it into committee, have some additional consultations there and get the members' and the public's specific input on some of the proposals they may have to improve this legislation.

As parliamentary assistant, I will certainly be very interested in hearing from the member for Beaches-Woodbine, the member for St Catharines and others who may be interested in contributing their years of wisdom and understanding of social services in the province to improving this legislation. I'm sure the minister will be very open to considering some of those proposed amendments as well, as we seek through this bill to ensure that the people of Ontario are best served with the taxpayers' dollars that we are committing to social services.

1610

**The Acting Speaker:** The Chair recognizes the member for Mississauga South.

**Mr Bradley:** Do not adjust your set.

**Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South):** We'll just ignore the comments from the member for St Catharines.

*Interjection.*

**Mrs Marland:** No, it isn't Halloween. You commented on my apparel last week when I stood to speak, as I recall. Both outfits are from Clues Clothing in my riding. I might tell you. Nevertheless, I'm very happy with how I look. I'm sorry if it offends your eyes.

**Mr Bradley:** No, that's great. It's great on a TV set.

**Ms Lankin:** You're getting into really dangerous territory. Stop while you're ahead.

**Mrs Marland:** Yes, it is really dangerous territory, but I'm not likely to take you to court because I think too highly of you personally.

To a very serious matter, which is the matter that we are discussing at this time, which is to time allocate, which means to discontinue the debate at this time in this chamber on this bill. It doesn't mean that the government is saying they do not want to hear from anyone else or they don't want to hear any more from the opposition. It's simply that at this stage in the process of proceeding with legislation we're saying we've had, as a matter of fact, almost eight and a half hours in second reading. What we're saying is now is the time to take it to committee. What happens is we take it to committee and we hear from the public. Nothing is more beneficial to any government than to hear from the public, with particular individual interests in all parts of this bill.

As a matter of fact, that also doesn't close out, of course, the opposition, because the opposition, both parties, are members of the committees which will conduct the public hearings. We're simply saying now we want to get a reaction from the public if there are amendments to be made and improvements or changes to be made to this legislation. We're simply saying, "Let's get on with it."

Holding it up in this place forever doesn't move us to that point where we do actually hear from the public.

As the former critic for people with disabilities in this province when I was in both the official opposition and the third party, I am really thrilled about the Ontario Disability Support Program Act which this government is bringing into legislation. I'm very happy about it, I think more so than anything because we know that the changes we are making have been long overdue. Unfortunately, I can't recall what the official opposition party has said about this particular section of the act as it pertains to disabilities, but I'm certainly very much aware that the member for London Centre and the member for Beaches-Woodbine have also supported this part of this bill wholeheartedly and are very happy to see these changes being made and moved along.

For a long time, people with disabilities have been asked not to be labelled. They've been asked not to be treated in the general welfare pool because they simply should not be there, they should never have been there, and this bill changes that. People with disabilities will no longer be labelled permanently unemployable, which has been a very bad thing that all governments have been guilty of doing. That's one of the changes.

With this act, all aspects of disability will be covered: personal care, functioning in the community and functioning in the workplace. People with disabilities need help in all aspects of their daily living, depending on the degree of disability; also to treat individual disabilities individually. That also is important because you can't have a blanket policy that covers everyone and meets everyone's needs. Finally, individuals will have their own care and needs met individually.

We also will have through the Ontario disability support program a new and separate program which will be

created for these people with disabilities. The new program will not only meet their unique needs but it will protect their benefits. The protection of those benefits is a very important aspect because that is the security for those people with special needs. Some of the financial rules, for example, will be more generous for people with disabilities than is the case under the current welfare system, because finally people with disabilities are being removed from the general welfare system. They will have higher asset limits.

There will be an increase in the amount of compensation award that could be retained and the ability to retain the cash surrender value of a life insurance policy and to take a loan against it to cover the costs related to the advanced stages of a serious illness and enabling people with disabilities to benefit more from gifts and inheritances so that families can provide a more secure future for their adult children.

That's one of the major areas of concern that I have come across for families with adult children with disabilities. Parents who have cared for their children at home for all of their lives are now elderly and they're concerned about what's going to happen to their children after they've gone. We are now putting in place an avenue of support through gifts and inheritance and establishing individual programs for their children so that they know they will be looked after, after they are no longer here to look after them themselves. It's a very important subject to all of us in this House and we appreciate the support of the opposition parties with this Ontario disability support program.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, the member's time has expired. The Chair recognizes the member for St Catharines.

**Mr Bradley:** Thank you, Mr Speaker, and welcome back from conducting other business. We missed you around here and we always liked having you in the chair, with your sense of fairness and propriety in this House.

I want to say first of all that I am extremely disappointed this afternoon to be speaking on a time allocation motion. I would prefer to be addressing the House fairly substantially on the contents of this particular bill and giving some advice on how the bill might be improved.

There are components of this legislation, as is often the case when any government introduces legislation, that are supportable. The goal that is out there I think is a goal that everyone shares, and that is the goal of ensuring that people have an opportunity to find gainful work in our society. I would surmise that the overwhelming number of people who are receiving some kind of assistance, if they could have their own way, would be wanting to find some employment, employment of which they could be proud, employment which would provide for them on a basis that didn't involve others contributing to their wellbeing, but that is not always the circumstance we face.

1620

We are in an interesting phase in our society, a difficult phase in our society. We've come out of a very deep recession. In the period of time from 1990 to about 1994 the

province experienced, as did the United States and some other jurisdictions, a very deep recession where a lot of jobs were going to disappear. What is disconcerting about the kind of recovery we see now from a recession is that it is often a jobless recovery. In days gone by when there was a recession it seemed that, as the economy picked up, many of the jobs that had disappeared, those actual jobs, would return. For instance, at various manufacturing operations we would see that when sales dropped, the workforce in those plants that produced the products or the services dropped, and that was understandable although regrettable.

What we see now is that when we return to circumstances of relative prosperity, the jobs do not return. They are replaced by technology, are replaced by computerization which is a form of technology, or are not replaced at all because the company has decided to downsize. There were many jobs that people with not a large number of educational or technical skills used to be able to get in the past. Those jobs have disappeared to a very large extent.

You could say: "This person isn't working, this person is collecting social assistance. Why don't they go and" — and you'd name what it was. There are significantly fewer jobs today of that nature. That's of great concern because those individuals who do not have those skills, who might not have that educational background, who do not have the connections within society, find themselves unable to find meaningful and gainful work.

The components of this bill which assist people by providing some additional training, by providing some opportunities to gain experience, are commendable and are certainly acceptable, I think, to all in this House. There are some components that worry the opposition and that is why we believe there should be a more extensive debate so individual members can raise those individual circumstances.

Unfortunately, once again, and at a record pace, this government is imposing yet another time allocation motion, a motion that chokes off debate in this House on an important piece of legislation.

One could say, if this was being done so that we could have very extensive hearings on this legislation, then that might be a fairly compelling argument in favour —

**Mr Wildman:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I was wondering if the Speaker could ascertain whether there's a quorum present.

**The Acting Speaker:** Would you check if there's a quorum.

**Clerk at the Table:** A quorum is not present, Speaker.  
*The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.*

**Clerk at the Table:** A quorum is now present, Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** The Chair recognizes the member for St Catharines.

**Mr Bradley:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. I continue with a significant number of members in the House today to be able to point out to the House why it is unwise for the government to be proceeding with a time allocation motion.

I mentioned that if the government were saying that they felt there was sufficient debate in this House and that they wanted to hear from a wide cross-section of the people of Ontario about specific provisions in this legislation, so those individuals could offer some constructive suggestions on how the legislation might be improved, then it would be understandable, if not acceptable, that the government would be invoking yet another closure motion, yet another motion to choke off debate in the House and speed up the process.

What I have noticed in this time allocation motion is that provision is made for only two more days of hearings in Toronto and four presumably outside of Toronto, but at least during the recess between the time this part of the session ends and when it continues.

**Ms Lankin:** The two in Toronto are two and a half hours, too.

**Mr Bradley:** The member for Beaches-Woodbine appropriately points out that while they are held here in Toronto, they would be two-and-a-half-hour periods of time.

It seems to me that now the government has firmed up its proposals by placing them in legislative form, the government should want to hear from those who have comments to make, and of course the world doesn't stop and start at the borders of the GTA. There are many areas in the province that want to have input. I'm sure that people in the Niagara Peninsula, for instance, both those who are in favour of the legislation and those who are opposed, would like to make representations to the committee, yet we're seeing only four days during the intersession.

My colleague the member for Fort William was chatting with me earlier today about this, saying of course that we in the Liberal Party want to see far more days allocated for the purpose of those public hearings. They could go to places such as Thunder Bay and London, Ontario, and Windsor and perhaps Timmins and perhaps Stratford and other places around Ontario to hear from people who have constructive suggestions. But this will be limited by this time allocation motion to only four days, and I think that is simply not acceptable.

It is clear that the agenda of the government then is to not particularly pay attention to those representations, but to simply speed this legislation through and not make the kind of changes to the legislation that we think would be constructive. I hope I'm not being overly cynical.

#### *Interjections.*

**Mr Bradley:** The New Democrats think I'm not being and some of the Conservatives think I am being, so I'm going to try to err on the side of optimism and hope that more input is going to be accepted, but I'm sure my colleagues in the New Democratic Party would agree with me when I say that if this were so, it could be clearly indicated by allocating far more days for public hearings so the public could have that input.

**Mr Wildman:** Or more days for amendment.

**Mr Bradley:** Or for amendment, because there is time needed for that. But this all comes into the context of the

changes to the standing orders and that is basically what we're dealing with.

I have tried to indicate to various groups and individuals in our society who are concerned about the speed with which this government is moving in terms of implementing its radical and reckless revolution that has severe consequences for many in our society that the changes to the rules, the procedural changes in this House, represent the major legislative initiative of this government; that while there are individual bills with which they may find themselves in significant disagreement, the worst thing the government has done in fact is change the procedural rules to grease the skids for its controversial and often ill-advised legislation, thereby limiting the amount of debate that is permitted for the purpose of this legislation, diminishing the role of the elected members of this assembly.

Essentially they are turning the keys over to the advisers to the Premier, the people in the Premier's office who advise on these matters, and the political advisers to the ministers within the ministry and to a certain extent to senior members of the civil service, loyal and good people that they are.

I see this as a diminishing of the role of this Legislature. I see this as a significant step backwards for democracy, and yet that is what we are confronted with. If only the people of this province knew how significant those rule changes are. If only they knew that at the very time when many non-cabinet members within the government caucus, within the Progressive Conservative caucus, are wondering aloud if the government is moving too quickly and too drastically and not looking at the consequences of its actions, at that very time the government, with its overwhelming majority, has passed a motion in this House forcing new rules, changing the rules in the middle of the game, if you will, to make it more convenient for the government to push through its legislation. That's essentially what we're dealing with this afternoon: not the substance of a bill but the rule changes.

1630

They have, through these rule changes, taken away what I'll refer to as the bargaining chips that members of the opposition have. When the three House leaders, Mr Wildman for the NDP, Mr Johnson and I, meet with the whips of the three parties, the people who are also in an executive position, when we sit down together to try to deal with matters of importance, we recognize that the opposition has very few chips left in the situation where we're bargaining. Norm Sterling, who is the Minister of Environment and Energy today, used to say that the only way you can influence a government is if you have some way of slowing them down. I've quoted on many occasions my friend Ernie Eves, the provincial Treasurer and former government House leader and, by the way, former House leader of an opposition party when he has said it is important that the opposition have some bargaining chips so there is a sawoff.

For instance, if the government had said, "If you will limit debate on second reading in the House, we will

provide 16 days of hearings, not four days of hearings," he would have found the opposition would be very accepting of that proposal. But we don't have that choice now. We don't have that bargaining opportunity with the government to help those out there who feel the government is inflicting upon them legislation which is ill-conceived and perhaps damaging.

We see the question period, which is so significant in our society, relegated to seventh place. The government can introduce its bills, it can introduce motions, it can have committee reports, it can have a large number of items that take place before question period, and therefore question period is pushed back potentially and shortened by the fact that government business must begin at 4 pm.

All of this is somewhat bewildering to the public because they don't deal on a daily basis with the rules of this House. Members of the news media who try to sell their editors on this story find that the editors say, "No, there must be something else of more immediate significance." Yet in this Parliament the most important motion or piece of legislation introduced and passed has been the changes to the procedural rules which now allow the government to ram through its legislation in record time.

A time allocation motion of this kind will mean that if we were worried about the number of people out there who need hip replacements and knee replacements and other orthopaedic work done — as you would know, Mr Speaker, there are so many in our society, as we grow older and as our population grows older because people are living longer now, who are waiting for those kinds of operations, and the problem they are confronted with is significant pain and disability which could be solved in many cases by a knee replacement or hip replacement or replacement of another joint. I think the waiting time these people have at the present time for services of this kind is unacceptable. I know many people personally who have had to wait some long period of time before being able to be put out of their misery by having this operation. I think we should be moving forward with initiatives that will permit that to happen in a more timely fashion.

I know you will have read about the kidney dialysis patients at the Hotel Dieu Hospital. My friend from Beaches-Woodbine, being a former health minister, will recall that her government was part of the team that was trying to improve the services. In fact, when they were in power that opportunity arose and there was some significant funding provided to the Hotel Dieu Hospital to continue its kidney dialysis.

We have an MRI which has now been approved for St Catharines after very significant pressure from the opposition. While the people have to raise the funds for it — and that was mentioned in the House today — for the purpose of the capital cost —

**Mrs Helen Johns (Huron):** How much did you put in when you were in government?

**Mr Bradley:** I can say to the member that the hospitals were receiving adequate funding to carry out their responsibilities in those days. In fact, if they didn't get a 10% increase, they thought the government was being cheap.

Yet we tried to be fair with them and still provide the necessary funding.

The member does raise a legitimate issue, though, and that is, she will recall when she was in the election campaign watching the leaders' debate. She will remember when Robert Fisher of Global TV asked Mike Harris, the leader of the Conservative Party, "Do you think any of these health care reforms that you are about to implement if you get elected will involve the closing of hospitals?" I remember very well because I was watching. I've known Mike Harris for a number of years. I was watching and Mike Harris said, "Certainly, Robert, I can guarantee you it is not my plan to close hospitals," and indeed hospitals are closing across Ontario.

I can tell you that the General Hospital in St Catharines, the Hotel Dieu Hospital in St Catharines and the Shaver Hospital in St Catharines are all needed. None should be closed and all should be appropriately funded.

I'm glad the member for Huron raised that issue of the inadequacy of funding for the health care system. I agree with her that the health care system is underfunded. The reason for that, as she will know, is that the government has to feed this silly income tax cut that benefits the richest people in our society the most. When I talk to people in my community, even those who have some benefit —

*Interjection.*

**Mr Bradley:** — I'm sure the member for Etobicoke-Humber agrees with me — even those who gain some benefit from that tax cut are coming to say to me, "Given the choice, we would prefer to see our services provided, because we recognize how important our health care services are. If the choice is between an income tax cut and closing my hospital, please keep my hospital open," they'll say to me. If the very rich who do exceedingly well by the income tax cut didn't have a social conscience, and many of them do, but those who might not have that social conscience are saying, "I think that's a good idea, because I can afford to go to the United States to get any additional care I need." Well, not everybody can afford that.

One of the things all three parties represented in this House could be justifiably proud of over the years has been the establishment of our health care system, a publicly funded health care system that means the amount of money in your wallet does not determine the quality of health care you get in Ontario, and that's the way it should stay. I have great fears that that is not the way it is heading.

I look at psychiatric services. Interestingly enough, that has a lot to do with this bill. People will say, "On the streets now I see far more people who seem to be wandering aimlessly or perhaps are begging or perhaps look downtrodden." Many of these people are former psychiatric patients or psychiatric patients, people who would have an exceedingly difficult time obtaining employment. As I mentioned the other night in this House, while I listen to people say they should be made to work, I then ask people who might have a business, "Would you hire these individuals?" and they have to concede that most of them

would not hire those individuals because they have significant psychiatric problems.

There was a great fad — or movement, I guess, is a better word — towards deinstitutionalization of individuals with psychiatric problems. It was felt they would do better in the community, and indeed with the appropriate resources in the community many would be able to cope well.

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Unfortunately, the deinstitutionalization took place. Those individuals were allowed and encouraged to go back into the community. But the services required to serve their needs were not there, so many schizophrenics, many people with other psychiatric problems find themselves very vulnerable in the society in which we live. I've often wondered, who is it out in the streets? Not all of the people are in that category. Many of the people are those who are not receiving appropriate psychiatric services that they need.

If we didn't have this time allocation motion to debate this afternoon, we could have continued the debate on gasoline prices. I had several members of the Liberal caucus who wanted to speak on this and get our resolution passed, particularly the amendment —

**Ms Lankin:** I can see them here waiting to speak. They're here waiting to speak at this moment.

**Mr Bradley:** They are in their offices at this moment, hoping that the government will relent, will abandon this particular motion and bring forward the gas pricing motion, because there's an excellent amendment in there that calls the bluff of the provincial government, an amendment which calls upon the provincial government to take the initiative, and I cannot understand why this was not the case.

My good friend the Minister of Economic Development and Trade was no doubt waiting for that debate to continue, and I want to compliment him — and I'm not trying to be political when I say it. People in this House will think I'm being political, because I am very often political, but I want to say to him, to give him his credit, he was honest about the government position. I don't agree with that position — I may even quote it into the record again — but I want to say to you that he was honest. You see, he got up and said that this government believes in the free market system, the free enterprise system, and shouldn't be interfering in that system. That was consistent with what the cabinet stands for. Other ministers said the same thing.

I asked Mr Sterling a question. Of course he blamed taxes, because the Republican friends in the US said, "It's the taxes." Of course what was happening was it was the oil barons, the captains of the oil industry who were raising the prices. It was not, as my friend the Speaker would know, anybody else but those people. But he wanted to blame the taxes.

Then the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations just gave up. He needs a third hand to point somewhere else. He points to Ottawa. He can point to the

United States. He can point to the opposition. He needs another hand to do that.

**Mr David Turnbull (York Mills):** What did you blame when you were in opposition, Jim? Tell us who you blamed when you were in government.

**Mr Bradley:** I know in opposition my friend Mr Turnbull, now the government whip, was demanding that the provincial government take action, and I agreed with him on that occasion.

**Mr Turnbull:** No, never. You'll never find that quote from me. You're wrong.

**Mr Bradley:** Well, one of his colleagues at least. I don't want to attribute to him that which he denies saying.

The point I want to make is, we heard this phoney pronouncement from the Premier when he read the polls. Three different polls came in. The government had taken a dive in the polls, so the Premier said, "I'm going to distance myself from Mr Saunderson," even though Bill Saunderson was speaking the philosophy of this government. I didn't happen to agree with his answer, but I wanted to give him credit for honesty. You're not allowed to say somebody else is dishonest, but I'll say he was honest.

Then I heard the pronouncements of Mike Harris. He was going to be not only taxfighter but now gas price fighter. The people in the business, their jaws dropped, because they knew where he really stands. They knew he stands with the corporate captains of the oil industry and he didn't want to do anything about it. I thought, "Hurray." I was delighted because I said, "My friend Mike Harris is now going to bring forward legislation in this House, in his own jurisdiction."

He was going to bring in a predatory pricing law for gas. I thought he'd do that. I thought he would call the oil barons on the carpet and say, "This is unacceptable to the people of this province." I thought he would set up a provincial inquiry on gasoline prices. But what did he do? He got out his finger and pointed somewhere else, to Ottawa, and said, "I'm going to get my big brother after you." So Macho Mike, when it came to doing something in his own backyard, was nowhere to be found.

I want to say that the real position of the government — I have sent the government whip running, looking for old Hansards. I want to put on the record what the real position of the government is. This is my friend Bill Saunderson. I don't agree with him, but he's being honest. He's being honest. He's being undercut by the Premier, cast adrift by the Premier. He said the following when I asked him the question about gasoline prices.

I said, "Minister, now that virtually all of the stations in Metropolitan Toronto and southern Ontario are charging 60 cents per litre" — this is back on May 2, 1996. It was only 60 cents then; now way up over that in this latest spate — "are you satisfied that the people of Ontario are paying the most competitive price for gasoline in the world?" Here's what the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and —

**Mr Klees:** On a point of order, Speaker: I'd be very interested in hearing the honourable member's explanation

of what the issue he's referring to now possibly has to do with the matter before us, because I do believe that's a matter of a standing order, that we should be speaking to the issue before us.

**The Acting Speaker:** It is a point of order whether he's speaking on the bill. I've been listening attentively to him and I'm sure that he is going to get on to that part that we want to hear very soon.

**Ms Lankin:** On a point of order, Speaker: I appreciate your ruling on the point of order from the member for York-Mackenzie. I actually thought he was going to ask for a quorum call, so I'll do it instead.

**The Acting Speaker:** No, he wasn't going to, but you can. Would you please check.

**Clerk at the Table:** A quorum is not present, Speaker.  
*The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.*

**Clerk at the Table:** A quorum is now present, Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** The Chair recognizes the member for St Catharines.

**Mr Bradley:** Thank you, Speaker, for your confidence, first of all, that I will be tying this into the legislative initiative before us this afternoon.

For the member for York-Mackenzie's edification, because I think it's a legitimate question that he has, if there were anyone who were to lose benefits who shouldn't lose benefits, they wouldn't be able to afford the gas prices that are charged in Ontario, and that's why I'm into this issue.

Here's the answer of the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism, an honest answer from his point of view, but he was cut adrift by the Premier. He said: "If he was, and I'm sure he is, perusing the foreign press these days, he will see that the price of fuel is much higher than it was earlier on this year. There are various reasons for that, and we monitor these things very carefully. But I think, overall, Ontario is well served." That's the opinion he put forward in this House on May 2.

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Then on May 16 I came back to it again and I asked Mr Sterling, the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations of the day, about gas prices, "Are you going to defend the consumers of this province or are you going to apologize for the oil barons by blaming, as your American Republican friends do, the taxes?" and he did the same thing. Newt Gingrich and certain right-wing members of the US Congress, when the price of gas went up at that time, said, "Oh, well, it's not the oil companies, they didn't do it; it's taxes." Yet of course on that day, just as now in Ontario, it wasn't the taxes that had gone up; it was the take of the oil companies. That's what had gone up.

That's why Premier Harris, when he was asked, "Premier Harris, it's in your own backyard, are you going to cut the taxes on gas on this province?" said, "No, I'm not going to do that." He recognized, I think, that it was not the taxes in this instance driving the prices up, but rather the oil barons and their greed.

I asked a further question. I went back to my friend Bill Saunderson in February 1997, and again he gave me an honest answer from his point of view, an answer which is now of course shoved aside by the Premier. I asked him the question about gasoline prices again, and he gave me this answer:

"If you travel across Canada, I think our prices that I see at the pumps these days are quite fair. When one travels outside Canada, our prices here are comparable" — I say that again, "comparable" — to what I see going on in the world. There are certain areas that are closer to gas and oil production facilities and therefore pay a lesser price, but I think under our circumstances our prices are quite fair."

Then I asked him a supplementary question about this. I said the member for Quinte will fall off his chair when he hears this, because the member for Quinte had already been raising the issue in this House earlier that morning, and Mr Saunderson continued, again from his point of view, being very honest, as he is, "I'd like to just respond by talking a little bit about the economic philosophy of this government," and I'm sure he was speaking for the government. He said:

"...let me just tell you over there that we on this side of the House believe in the free enterprise system. We don't intend to dictate to companies what they should and should not do, provided they act within reason. I have no intention of interfering with the free enterprise system, the pricing system. If we were to do that, we would be a laughing-stock, sir. It would be a big mistake for this province. We would not attract businesses to this province."

He was simply stating the philosophy of the overwhelming majority of members of the caucus, and of the Premier and the cabinet, and yet the Premier, when he hit the skids in the polls, did an about-turn. The road to Damascus was before him, and he was converted. He suddenly wanted to portray himself as the defender of the consumer — and nobody was believing it. The people who have observed this government, particularly in the business community, believed Bill Saunderson, that he was stating the government position, as were other ministers and members, and yet the Premier again cut a minister away and left him out to dry, just as he did with the Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services when he had the bad day with the opening of what they call the new boot camp — I forget what our critic was calling it today, but —

**Mr Wildman:** Camp Run-Amok.

**Mr Bradley:** Camp Run-Amok, as Mr Ramsay was calling it today. When he had that bad day, did the Premier say, "Our minister is doing a good job, and I am part of this; I really have a lot of influence on what has happened"? No. He says, "Oh, the minister is having a tough day, I guess," or something of that nature, so he cut him adrift.

When my friend Mr Sterling, the Minister of Environment and Energy, was struggling to put together a program for the testing of vehicle emissions, and of course being confronted with all kinds of opposition in the cabinet, did

the Premier say, "Oh, it's my fault; I'm trying to stop this"? No. He said: "I don't know why there's a problem. I don't know what's wrong with the Minister of Environment and Energy."

I know what really happened. It's blocked by other ministers, it's blocked by the Premier, but who takes the heat? The minister, because the strategy is, particularly when the government becomes unpopular, you fob off to the ministers the unpopularity and distance the Premier from these items, and that's what's happening now within the government.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Bradley:** The member is interjecting out of his seat, but I'm still trying to hear what he is saying.

Anyway, I want to go on with a couple of other items particularly related to the legislation we have before us. Because we have this time allocation motion before us, we couldn't deal with legislation that would prevent the imposition of video lottery terminals or slot machines in every bar and every restaurant in every neighbourhood in every community in Ontario — much to the detriment of the most vulnerable people in our society, because as people become more vulnerable, as they become more desperate, they are more inclined to take a chance at gambling, and it's most unfortunate that happens.

I know all of those who ran on the family values ticket in the government must be imploring the Premier not to proceed with allowing the proliferation of video lottery terminals across this province by allowing them in these so-called 44 charity casinos, permanent casinos in communities that don't even want them in many cases. They will operate 24 hours a day, sucking every last dollar out of those communities.

I'm not a fan of casinos anywhere, but I'll say this for the ones in Windsor and Niagara Falls and Orillia, and particularly the border ones: At least they are there to attract tourists. A considerable amount of the money is coming from outside the community, and it is a tourist attraction. I can assure you that the so-called charity casinos are going to simply suck the money out of those communities, and there won't be money to spend on other commodities. That's my great concern about those, and they're going to influence other opportunities that charitable groups had for raising funds.

I think a lot of governments are moving in exactly the wrong direction in that regard, not just this government. The government is not alone, I assure you. There are governments all over North America that are moving in the wrong direction with regard to gambling.

I know if I were to canvass my friends in the Christian Reform Church, the Anglican Church, the United Church, virtually any of the religious organizations in our province, they would be calling upon the government to put a halt to any further expansion of gambling opportunities in this province. If the government did that, I'll tell you one thing: I'd be the first one to publicly rise in this House and put out a press release and make known to all my approval of that government action, if that were the case. I'm not confident, however, that will happen.

I hope when this bill goes to committee, as short a time as it is, the government will look at some of the potential areas of weakness. The overall thrust of trying to get people back to work is one with which everyone agrees. The effort to eliminate any fraud is something we all agree with, because the more money that is lost to fraud, the less money there is for those who legitimately require assistance.

There is one area I remember I mentioned once before when the previous government was in power. I got some flak for it; I think I was accused of welfare-bashing. Both the member for St Catharines-Brock at that time, Christel Haeck, and I were labelled as something for doing that. She was a New Democrat and I was a Liberal at the time. She was government; I was opposition. It was the problems being encountered with welfare being dispensed to people between the ages of 16 and 18, teenagers, without the kinds of rules and regulations that would be beneficial.

Where there was genuine abuse existing, where there was an intolerable situation at home and where the individual was determined to get an education — and there were some examples of that — then I didn't hear anybody disagree.

**1700**

The government now, through this legislation, is making a change which will probably improve that circumstance, because I believe it goes now to a trustee, as the member for York-Mackenzie was mentioning in his remarks, and is dispensed from there. So we don't simply have people who decide they don't like the circumstances at home, don't like the 2 am curfew or don't like the fact that they have to perform legitimate chores around the house and want to take a hike from the house to go out and get welfare and have a good time. That's not going to be the case for those people in that age group. In the last government I remember Mr Silipo was trying to address that problem, and it's further addressed in this legislation.

So not all of the legislation is bad. I hope, and I've had assurance from the parliamentary assistant, that they will look carefully at the provision for those who are aged 60 to 64 who might find themselves in a circumstance where it's extremely difficult to gain employment. Some in that age category will do well and will be able to get employment. Many will find it very difficult.

Unfortunately, our society worships youth. We all hate seeing that invisible barrier that's up when people go to an employer and the employer finds out how old the person is or sees how old the person is and tends to not look seriously at the application. One area where I hope the government will look, and I hope there will be some discretion built into the regulations in this, will be in the field of those between the ages of 60 and 64.

On the provisions for the disabled, we're waiting for more specifics but we're not so apprehensive as we were at the beginning of the consultation process now that some of the details are out. We still want to hear, of course, from people across the province, but we were very apprehensive when first we heard some of the movements of the government in the direction of discounting some people

who are disabled, those on the fringe, because you have to be substantially disabled.

Another tricky area when you talk to people who work with the recipients of social services will be that of people who are, to put it bluntly, hopeless alcoholics or hopelessly hooked on drugs, who will not be able to work easily until their illness is treated and they can come back into society. They don't have much sympathy from the general population, except, I'm told, when people experience it within a family. I have not had that experience so I can't say at first hand, but I've listened to others who have said that. Some welfare workers have said, "You have no idea what this is going to do when it happens."

I hope within the regulations, within the application of the legislation they look carefully at that, as I do with those who have psychiatric problems and are being compelled to find employment, when in fact employers are going to be extremely reluctant in many cases to employ those individuals. At least, that's the experience they've had in years gone by.

When I look at this time allocation motion, I express disappointment, I want to candidly say, not so much that debate in this House on this bill will be limited, but at the number of days that are allocated for public hearings. The government will make a case that it has, previous to the introduction of the bill, conducted some consultation and it has some consultation. But what people like to be able to react to, my friend from Algoma who has been here since 1975, both in opposition and in government, will know, is the final product the government brings forward in terms of its legislation.

That's why two days in Toronto with two-and-a-half-hour hearings and four days in the intersession will not be sufficient to get that input. I ask the parliamentary assistant and the minister to implore the government House leader to consider more time to have that kind of input. So far we have not seen that, but perhaps we will in the future.

I know as well that when we get into a circumstance of this kind — and I will be allowing my colleague to intervene in this debate appropriately. In fact I am going to be in a position where I allocate equal time for my friend from Algoma and his colleagues to participate in this debate. I would like, for instance, to be able to debate the bill that the Minister of Natural Resources wants brought forward, certain amendments to some acts out there that are important. I want to say to him — Mr Speaker, you would understand this — that in the days —

**Hon Chris Hodgson (Minister of Natural Resources, Northern Development and Mines):** How about gas prices?

**Mr Bradley:** I wish this afternoon we were debating gas prices, but we're not. Here we are, I'm trying to help the Minister of Natural Resources out with his legislation. The problem is that in the good old days before the rule changes I could speak, as could Bud Wildman to Dave Johnson — I'm sorry to use the names; we're supposed to use the ridings — about these matters and say, "You know something? I think that bill probably won't take all that

long." But then the government imposed these new rule changes that severely restrict the opposition. It's taken away the flexibility and it's taken away the goodwill that was once there to negotiate these matters. That's my concern today.

When we spoke on the resolution — my friend from Muskoka will remember this — all of us in the opposition suggested that this would poison the atmosphere, that this would reduce the amount of cooperation you would see, as they tighten the noose on the opposition. Unfortunately, it has done that. So when I want to help out the Minister of Natural Resources with this legislation, I'm unable to do so when we're confronted with day after day of time allocation motions.

**Mr Wildman:** They just tabled another one.

**Mr Bradley:** What's this one on?

**Mr Wildman:** It's on the city of Toronto bill.

**Mr Bradley:** I understand from my friend the House leader of the NDP we have yet another motion closing off debate, this one on the city of Toronto bill.

We also have had submitted to the table a bill which cuts off any further debate on the libraries act. We've had only a little over a couple of hours of debate on the libraries act, which adversely impacts libraries across our province. My own library was very concerned about this. In fact they met with the government members from the Niagara region, the Progressive Conservative members, and expressed those concerns.

I didn't get those concerns directly expressed to me because somehow the board decided it didn't want to meet with Peter Kormos and with Jim Bradley, two other members in the region. I'm the member for St Catharines, and they did not want to meet with us. I can't figure out why that was, that the library board in St Catharines would not want to meet with the three members: my friend Frank Sheehan, the member for Lincoln, who represent the western part of St Catharines; my friend Tom Froese, from the south end of St Catharines; and myself. Somehow the library board or someone on the library board decided that only the Conservative members would be consulted.

What was the "thank you" they got for that? The "thank you" was we're getting a time allocation motion that permits no more debate in this House on that bill. It will simply be rammed through the House. The consequences for libraries across this province will be very significant, because as all of us know, rich people, privileged people, can afford to buy the books. They've got a library of their own. They can afford to have the best tapes, CDs and other equipment. They can afford that, but the average person out there, particularly those of more modest income, find it difficult when you impose significant user fees or have to close libraries or restrict their hours of operation.

**Hon David Johnson:** Bill 142.

1710

**Mr Bradley:** The government House leader interjects. He says, "Bill 142," and I am saying that we are talking about those of modest income. The reason I mention the libraries is that those people require libraries. The rich

people don't really need them as much as people of modest incomes, because they're able to purchase their books. I find that extremely unfortunate, and I know my friend from Algoma would like to see more debate in this House. After all the hearings, limited as they were, that we had on this bill, where — Bud, didn't you tell me all the people in one of the communities said, no, they didn't like the legislation? Which community was that? Somewhere up north, you said.

**Mr Wildman:** All of them said no except for one, Wawa. So these guys only quoted Wawa.

**Mr Bradley:** So there we are. Most of the people said this legislation wasn't good, so I wanted it in third reading. Third reading is of course, as you know better than anyone, Mr Speaker, the opportunity to talk about why the government should not proceed with the bill, in other words, why it should abandon it. I thought in third reading some compelling speeches from members of the opposition would persuade the more progressive members of the government, few as they might be in the cabinet, few as they might be in the caucus, some of the progressive members, that this legislation should be abandoned.

I can't believe that those who know of the needs of particularly children but others in our society would want to see them penalized so we can provide a tax cut for the most wealthy people in our society.

I want to provide to my friend from Algoma the time he is looking for to be able to canvass and address the significant issues. So I will conclude my remarks by saying to my good friend the member for Mississauga South, whose remarks I enjoyed very much today —

**Mr Wildman:** You were very bright.

**Mrs Marland:** But you enjoyed my outfit more, right?

**Mr Wildman:** Both are very bright.

**Mr Bradley:** — and is very bright today in this House. I must say I enjoyed her remarks very much. I hope she will use her good offices as a longer-serving member of this Legislature to implore the Minister of Community and Social Services and the government House leader to provide more time for committee hearings for this particular legislation so we can have the kind of input that will make this a much better piece of legislation than it is in its present existence.

**Mr Wildman:** I rise to participate in this debate on the time allocation motion related to Bill 142, noting that we have before the Legislature now not only this time allocation motion, which deals with the legislation on social assistance and on disabilities, but also a time allocation motion before the House dealing with Bill 109, the libraries act, a bill which has not had any third reading debate as yet. It's only had a couple of hours of second reading debate.

Here we have a situation where we have both these time allocation motions before the House and now, today, just now, the Clerk has handed to me a notice of motion that has been presented to the table by the government House leader for another time allocation motion on Bill 148, the city of Toronto bill. I guess once you do it, it gets easier to do it, and the more you do it, the more routine it

becomes. It's sort of like, "The devil made me do it the first time and it gets easier each time I do it."

The devil in this case is the Premier's office, I suppose, and the Premier's office has made the government House leader do this initially and he's gotten to feel used to it and he's going to do it more and more and more to the point where on Bill 109, the libraries act, there hasn't even been any third reading debate and he is time-allocating it — no debate at all. I'm hoping and I think the government House leader is considering perhaps we should have some third reading debate on Bill 109 — I hope that's the case — before we actually move on a time allocation motion. We'll see.

One of the reasons the government said it needed to have rule changes was because it wasn't able to get its legislation through quickly enough.

**Mrs Marland:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'm wondering if you would consider referring to the Premier of the province as the devil as appropriate parliamentary language, when the member for Algoma said, "The devil made me do it."

**The Acting Speaker:** That is not a point of order and the Chair recognizes the member for Algoma.

**Mr Wildman:** I didn't refer to the Premier as Satan or Lucifer or Beelzebub. I simply used it in terms of the expression, "The devil made me do it," a colloquialism which is widely used in the vernacular. But if the member believes that the Premier or someone in his office might in fact be related to those terms, I can hardly argue.

**Mr Klees:** Mr Speaker, I wonder if we could ask the member for High Park-Swansea to give us the theological implications of the reference to "The devil made me do it."

**The Acting Speaker:** Maybe after 6 o'clock. The Chair recognizes the member for Algoma.

**Mr Wildman:** I'm sure that would be great for the edification of all of us, but I'm sorry we do not have the time. We don't have the time because we have a time allocation motion before the House. That is why we don't have the time for real, serious debate on the moral issues of the day.

Before us we have a time allocation motion which says that on Bill 142 at second reading stage we will move further without any more debate or amendment and that this matter will be referred to the standing committee on social development. Now, the government members have said in this debate that they want to get the matter before committee quickly because they want to hear from the public. Yet I really question their sincerity when you look at the time allocation motion, because it says it will be referred to the committee in two days initially — that means two and a half hours a day when the House is sitting, so you're looking at five hours during the week of September 29 — then for only four days during the recess for hearings, and then only two days for clause-by-clause during the recess.

If the government were really serious about wanting to hear from the public, why is it only allocating in essence five days' time for hearings and then only two days for clause-by-clause? I hope that if there are many people

interested in making presentations on this bill that the government would be willing to listen and to hear what they have to say and then to actually act on that when it comes to clause-by-clause discussion so there can be amendments that will respond to the concerns that are raised during the hearings.

I find the time allocation motion to indicate that there really isn't a great deal of sincerity, because then, when the matter comes back to the House, the allocation motion sets forward only one sessional day for third reading debate, and then a five-minute bell for a vote.

1720

This is hardly an indication that the government is serious about listening to people, particularly when you're looking at a bill that is as complex as this one. This is a bill that deals with what the government calls its Ontario Works program and which also deals with significant amendments with regard to assistance for the disabled, which actually deals with two pieces of legislation: the Ontario Works Act and the Ontario Disability Support Program Act.

In our view, there are significant changes in the second one of these that can be supported. There will need to be amendments, but we think there are significant changes that are important for people with disabilities.

We think these two pieces of legislation should have been separated so they could be dealt with separately in this House. We have significant concerns about the Ontario Works Act. We suspect that those who appear before the committee, when it has those truncated hearings, will express some considerable concerns about the Ontario Works Act. There will also, I suspect, be people who will appear before the committee, if they have time, and who will say that they welcome a number of the changes proposed in the Ontario Disability Support Program Act.

For those of us who have concerns about the first and think the second is more supportable, it would be much better if they were separate so we could deal with them individually and vote on them separately. We really think it's unfortunate that the government would chose to time allocate and deal with these two pieces of very important legislation at once.

I really don't think the government has removed people with disabilities from the welfare system in doing this. What they have done is that they've removed them from the municipally run one and kept them at the provincial level.

The changes in the Ontario Works Act make regulations in 48 different areas, ranging from eligibility requirements, benefit amounts, conditions of workfare to rules for appeals, contractual relationships between the province and the Ontario Works delivery agents.

There are many people who took the Premier seriously when he said he wanted to get them work. They wanted to work. People want to be able to support themselves and their families. I'm not certain, though, that many of them understood when he said that that what he was talking about was maintaining them in the welfare system and

requiring them to do these kinds of work projects for their benefits.

I'm also certain that many of the single parents in this province did not expect that it meant that they were going to have to go out on work projects once their children went to school, so that we are turning all their children into latch-key kids when they come home.

**Mr Klees:** Do you want them to stay at home all day?

**Mr Wildman:** No, I don't, but I don't want to see these kids improperly supervised when they return from school. That's why we need more assistance for good-quality child care in this province and why we are very concerned about the cuts this government has made in that area. There are already 8,500 children of social assistance recipients on child care waiting lists in Toronto alone.

Also, I'm concerned about the lien against property proposed in this legislation.

There have been lots of concerns, and I suspect during the truncated hearings there will be many more, with regard to the so-called encrypted biometric information provided for in this legislation, that is, finger identification to determine who is actually carrying out their responsibilities under the act properly.

My area, Algoma district, is one of a few in the province that has been moving forward on the Ontario Works program. Right now we have somewhere between 60 and 90 people receiving benefits who are working for their cheques. That works out to less than 7% of the recipients in our area, yet it is one of the areas that is touted by the government as a success story. I'm not certain it is.

I think we should be doing everything we can to help people gain the skills they require to get jobs, to assist them into employment, to give them assistance in helping to raise their families and to ensure that the poorest among us have a future in this province. Unfortunately, I don't think this legislation is going to achieve that, and that's why I think we need to have more hearings.

I want to make one other point before I turn to the Ontario Disability Support Program Act. I am very concerned about the changes that say a person who is suffering from acute alcoholism or from other drug addiction will not be eligible for benefits. At least, that's the way I read it; I may be misreading it. But if that is the case, this is a very serious problem. If the person's disability is the result of I guess self-inflicted problems such as alcoholism and drug abuse, they are no longer eligible. What happens to those people if they can't work, if they are disabled because of an illness? That's what alcoholism is. What happens to them and what happens to their families? I'm very concerned about this. That is of significant concern to me.

I'd like to turn to the questions of disability. The stated objective is to move persons with disabilities who are receiving income assistance and benefits from the family benefits program out of the welfare system, where they say they shouldn't have been in the first place, which I agree with, and create a new and separate program for persons with disabilities to meet their unique needs and protect their benefits and to help remove barriers to employment for persons with disabilities. I agree with that

purpose. I know the members opposite might find that hard to understand, that a member of the opposition could stand in his place and say he agrees with the government's purpose in a certain piece of legislation, but we do.

I certainly welcome the changes that will not exclude people in the early stages of degenerative conditions such as MS or other situations such as schizophrenia or clinical depression. But as I said, it appears from the legislation that those suffering from alcohol and drug addictions will not be considered disabled, and that I'm worried about.

These are matters that must be dealt with in the committee hearings, that must be responded to in the clause-by-clause analysis and amendment of the bill. It doesn't seem fair to me — it's more than unfair — that we protect those poor individuals who are suffering from conditions like schizophrenia and yet say to someone suffering from acute alcoholism that somehow they shouldn't be eligible.

I support this legislation. I think we should be dealing with the two of them separately so the concerns we have about Ontario Works can be dealt with separately from the disabled support program.

I don't think the time allocation motion is giving the required amount of time to properly deal with these questions. I know it isn't. The government is saying: "We've got to get on with it, we've got to move forward. It's time for the government to govern. The government can't continue to consult all the time." Surely these are issues that are so important to the people of Ontario that we will properly deal with them and not rush them through.

1730

I hope this legislation means that people who are currently receiving income support will remain in the new program and that they will remain eligible in the future, that they won't be pushed out of the system and fall between the cracks. I'm concerned about the lien and repayment provisions which essentially will turn income assistance into a loan, and I need to know that someone who is a recovering alcoholic or suffers from aggression, depression or dyslexia will not be pushed out of the system.

With those remarks, I will say that I am very, very concerned about the tendency of the government to move to time allocation without giving proper time for debate in this House, for consultation with the public, for input from the public and for amendments. It seems the more often the government does it, the easier it is for them to do it.

These two pieces of legislation dealt with in Bill 142 should be separate. They should be dealt with separately. We should be having adequate hearings so that we can hear what the concerns are about them both, particularly the Ontario Works program, so that we can have proper amendments to improve the Ontario Disability Support Program Act and then move forward, rather than having a government that is so determined to move forward on its agenda that it isn't prepared to listen and give adequate time to ensure we do these things right.

Thank you, Mr Speaker. I'll be sharing my time with my colleague from Beaches-Woodbine.

**Ms Lankin:** I am genuinely distressed about the way in which this particular bill is being handled. I will also have some comments to make about time allocation motions in general, like the new one we just received at 5 o'clock tonight with respect to Bill 148, the City of Toronto Act, and the one that was tabled yesterday with respect to Bill 109, the Local Control of Public Libraries Act.

We're debating this afternoon a time allocation motion with respect to Bill 142, which is essentially a bill that contains two brand-new pieces of provincial legislation. I want to direct my comments most particularly in response to the member for Chatham-Kent and the member for York-Mackenzie who spoke on behalf of the government benches in favour of this time allocation.

Both of them said: "We can't just have endless debate. It can't go on and on. It has just taken too long in the House." I was thinking, "What's the definition of too long"? I think they would respond by saying, "Well, we've had three days of debate on this."

I ask you and I ask most people, when you're looking at completely rewriting the laws of social assistance, creating two new pieces of legislation, one to deal with social assistance recipients who are employable and another piece of legislation to deal with creating a whole new plan of income support for members of the disabled community, three days of hearing from legislators who have points of view to represent on behalf of their own constituents and on behalf of constituencies, communities affected by this bill who have come to us, who have made representation, to say that three days is excessive or somehow dragging things out I don't think would be credible with the public.

I'm sure when I inform the public that three days in this Legislature means less than eight hours of debate — because a sessional day of debate is from the time in the afternoon when orders of the day are called until 6 o'clock when the House adjourns — on a very controversial bill which is actually two pieces of legislation — I myself rose to speak to this bill, and with the rule changes and the limitation on length of speeches, I had 20 minutes to address this bill.

I chose in that time to address only the portion of the bill which dealt with income supports for members of the disabled community. I felt quite conflicted about that because in the critic responsibilities I have, as well as representing my own constituents, I have points of view to put forward on both sections of the bill. One of my critic responsibilities is disability issues. Therefore, that piece of legislation contained in this bill was quite important for me to address.

I'm also critic for children's issues and the social assistance piece of this, the Ontario Works Act, as it is called, has a profound impact on families and on children and the whole issue of child care in relation to employment opportunities. There is much I wanted to say about that as well.

But I only had 20 minutes. I did take some umbrage at the comment from the member for York-Mackenzie when he talked about having sat here for so long — less than

eight hours, again I'll point out — and listened to so much rhetoric. I would challenge him to go back and look at the Hansard record.

For example, when I spoke for 20 minutes, dealing exclusively with the bill that deals with income supports for the disabled community, I made it clear that I largely supported the direction of that bill, where it was attempting to go, setting up a separate income support program that was apart and separate from social assistance for members of the disabled community, the kind of approach that would give a sense of more independence, of some more security, of flexibility in terms of moving in and out of the system.

But I also was very clear about a number of areas of the act that were problematic. I spent time explaining some of those and some of the areas I felt needed to be amended.

In 20 minutes I didn't get through the key areas of amendments to a substantive piece of legislation which is only one half of the bill.

I also pointed out that in the way in which this government proceeds, everything is on how quickly you can get it done. You don't slow down and you don't listen. You're not willing to take the time to get it right. But you also, in combining two major pieces of legislation like this, have put members of the House in a very difficult position — myself, for example, who generally supports the direction of the disability income support act, which I would vote in favour of on second reading to get it out to public hearings, and then try, after public hearings, to work with the government to amend the bill in significant areas. Then I would have to see whether those amendments were carried forward and how the government responded to my suggestions to determine whether I could support it on third reading.

But in terms of the Ontario Works portion of this, on second reading, in principle I am opposed to this, so what do I do when the vote comes? You have combined two very disparate, separate pieces of legislation together in one. Not only that, you've now time-allocated it with less than eight hours of discussion in the House.

I always remain more concerned about what happens after second reading in the House because then we go out to public hearings. That's where we have the opportunity to have input from members of the public, from affected constituencies. That's where we're supposed to listen and get ideas. We're supposed to have the opportunity, in discussion with members of the public, to look for ways to improve the bill if it is improvable. Followed by that, MPPs in clause-by-clause in committee actually deal with the amendments.

The member for York-Mackenzie said very clearly when he was making his remarks — I believe the member for Chatham-Kent did as well — that they wanted to get this debate over in the House, this useless portion where MPPs speak because we've got nothing valuable to offer. I guess that's what was being intimated when the member for York-Mackenzie said he just heard a lot of rhetoric.

As I said, I took great offence and I'd like him to check the record in terms of my participation in this debate.

When they said they want to get it to committee because they want to hear from the public, they want to have good public participation on these two pieces of legislation combined into one bill, I point out to you that the time allocation motion sets out two days when there are regularly scheduled meetings. That means two and a half hours on each of those days. That's five hours of hearings here in Toronto. And there are four days during the intersession, four days to hear from the rest of the province of Ontario — five hours in Toronto, four days for the rest of the province for two substantial pieces of legislation, brand-new, that bear no relationship to the past. These are brand-new pieces of legislation that will affect an extraordinary number of people's lives in this province.

That's all the time you're giving to the public hearings that you say is what's driving this time allocation motion, that you want to get out and you want to hear from people? Quite frankly, that is not believable. What is believable is that you're ramming through your agenda yet again and that you want this all done and passed before the end of this legislative session. By December you want all this out there and being implemented and that's more important than taking the time to hear. In fact, you could have more hearings and hear from the public in a more substantive way and not affect the bottom line of your timetable at all.

1740

During the intersession in terms of committee hearings there are three weeks available and you've provided for four days. That is not acceptable, but it certainly lends no credence to the words of the members for Chatham-Kent and York-Mackenzie that they really are interested in hearing from the public.

I want to suggest to you that it is possible during those three weeks to expand the amount of time available to hear from people. Even though I disagree with you proceeding with a time allocation motion today, you could, during that intersession period, during those three weeks, make more time available to hear from members of the public and from affected communities in a more substantial way.

I remind you again these are two brand-new pieces of legislation. This is not just one act. You've combined it together improperly. The first thing you should have done was split this bill, but you've combined it together and then you've given the public four days. I think that's not satisfactory, so I guess the only thing I can do, in suggesting to the government that more time be made available for hearings but in such a way that it doesn't affect the bottom line of your time agenda of when you want this done, is to provide an opportunity for the government to do that and that's by moving an amendment.

So, Mr Speaker, I would like to move the following amendment: That government notice of motion 32 be amended by adding the following paragraphs:

"That all members of the standing committee on social development be provided with a list of organizations and

witnesses who have requested to appear before the committee and how many were denied that opportunity due to lack of time;

"That such report be delivered prior to the commencement of the first public hearing and that the committee be authorized to conduct an additional four days of public hearings during the recess, should the committee be informed that a significant number of Ontario citizens would be otherwise denied the opportunity to appear before their elected representatives and provide their assessment of Bill 142."

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Ms Lankin has moved that government notice of motion 32 be amended by adding the following paragraphs:

"That all members of the standing committee on social development be provided with a list of organizations and witnesses who have requested to appear before the committee and how many were denied that opportunity due to lack of time;

"That such report be delivered prior to the commencement of the first public hearing and that the committee be authorized to conduct an additional four days of public hearings during the recess, should the committee be informed that a significant number of Ontario citizens would be otherwise denied the opportunity to appear before their elected representatives and provide their assessment of Bill 142."

**Ms Lankin:** I just want to take a moment on that amendment to explain the import to the government members. It does not open this up in an uncontrolled way. It does not mean that this will go on forever and ever, which is I think the concern that would be expressed by government members. Your time allocation motion provides for four days of public hearings during the recess, during which public hearings will be held.

Four days during a three-week intersession is what you have provided for. I have suggested that if in the committee's opinion there are significant numbers of people who want to present to the committee who wouldn't be heard, the committee can decide to hold an additional four days of hearings. I think eight days of hearings on two major bills like this is totally unsatisfactory, but I'm trying to put something forward where there is this much chance that the government might support it.

Let me run through it again. Right now, your time allocation motion says, during the three-week intersession, four days only of hearings on this important bill that contains two brand-new acts, two brand-new pieces of legislation. I'm suggesting that if the committee feels that there are significant numbers of people who have requested to appear who would not be offered an opportunity to appear, they could increase that to four additional days. So it would be eight days in total during a three-week period. There's lots of time to fit that in. It doesn't change one iota when you finish the clause-by-clause and the amendments process or when you report out to the House and you finish third reading. It doesn't change the bottom line of your time limit on this at all. What it does is provide an opportunity that if it's necessary, in the committee's

opinion, there could be greater opportunity for public input into this bill.

I point out to you that the committee has a majority of government members, so you are the ones who will be able to decide if a significant number of people — significant enough, in your opinion — have applied and/or whether there should be four more days of hearings. You will be able to control that decision. If you don't pass this amendment, the committee has no ability, if it feels it's necessary, to increase the number of days, because the House will have passed a motion which supersedes anything the committee might do, saying you only have four days.

I really believe this is not enough, but I am trying to do something to effect a compromise here about a bill that I feel particularly strongly about. I have offered very constructive criticisms about the half of the bill that deals with the income support plan for members of the disabled community. I have suggested amendments that will be required. I have offered my support in principle for the direction of that bill. I have told you that I do not support the other half of that bill and I have not had the time in this House to address the reasons why for that. I have tried through this to be very constructive in dealing with the government, and the amendment I put forward I believe is a reasonable approach.

I'm sure, when I look at some of the other time allocation motions that have come forward, that I'm asking the government to take a big step here, and I understand that. I was absolutely appalled when I saw the time allocation motion that was tabled yesterday with respect to Bill 109, the Public Libraries Act, because in that time allocation motion — that bill, by the way, completed second reading in less than the required time. The parties agreed to expedite it out to hearings. Public hearings have been held, amendments have been dealt with, and it's time to come back into the House for third and final reading. The government's time allocation motion says there will be no third reading debate. We're just going to have a vote.

I was appalled by that because I believe in the parliamentary process. When a bill goes through second reading and it is approved in principle by this House, it then goes out to a process of committee to be dealt with in terms of the details, to hear from the public and to deal with amendments subsequent to what legislators have heard from the public.

That bill has been amended. It is not the same bill that the government introduced into this House. To think that you would come back in and simply have a vote on it, carried by the government majority, in which you would not allow any time — an hour, two hours — on the record to state the opinion of legislators with respect to that bill after it had gone through public hearings and the amendment process is a complete violation of the parliamentary process.

I am genuinely appalled that you would think that is appropriate. Third reading debate is often expedited, but it is an opportunity to put on the record the response of the Legislative Assembly members to a bill that has been

altered from when it was introduced by the government at first reading. That bill went through first and second reading in this House, it went through public hearings and went through amendment. It is no longer the same bill. I don't care what your rules say, you have no right to force a process where there is just a vote and there is no third reading debate, there is no input into the legislative record of this assembly in Ontario of what has occurred to this bill as it went through the public hearing process and the amendment process.

Third reading debate is there for a purpose, my friends, and for you to move time allocation motions that say there will be no third reading, you simply come in here and vote your majority, is a complete affront to parliamentary precedent and to parliamentary process.

Today your time allocation motion attempts to truncate the public hearing process. I say to the member for York-Mackenzie, who said over and over again he wanted to get this out for public hearings, on a bill as substantial as this, which has two brand-new pieces of legislation contained in it — and you know my opinion that they should be separate, they shouldn't be joined. To only allow, during that three-week intersession, four days of public hearings — you've got five hours here in Toronto and then four days to deal with the rest of the province — for two major pieces of legislation doesn't suggest you're interested in hearing from the public at all.

The amendment I'm putting forward would allow the committee, in the committee's wisdom — you control the committee; you've got the majority vote on it — to increase that number of days by an additional four if the committee felt that was necessary. In week 3 of the intersession, you can still have your two days of clause-by-clause, it can still be reported when the House comes back, and it can still be passed on the very same time line that is so important to you in your agenda.

1750

I implore the members to consider this. This does not tie you into anything other than giving the committee some flexibility, and I suggest there will be outrage in this province from those affected, although maybe you are counting on those people who don't have a very strong voice out there; maybe you're counting on the fact that other people won't care that they are not being listened to. If that is the case, that is despicable. You have the opportunity to still pass your bill in the same time frame but allow for more public debate. I hope the members would give consideration to that.

I remind you that we have seen a remarkable change in government positioning in the last week or so, since the polls came out that showed the government in a free fall and the Liberals climbing to lofty heights. I'm sure they are all feeling quite heady about those results.

**Mr Bradley:** No.

**Ms Lankin:** The member for St Catharines says no, but I see that grin and those dimples say something else.

That free fall you are in has been backed up with information to the government that people out there, even if they like the direction you are going in in some areas,

think you are moving way too fast, and the big thing is that you don't listen. It has become the hallmark of your government that you do not listen. You move ahead too quickly and you don't pay attention to detail. You are going to create chaos in terms of the implementation of many of these things.

We've seen the Premier all of a sudden, after stonewalling for so long, willing to meet with labour. Amazing photo op. We're seeing other sorts of things happening in terms of how bills being called before the House and what bills are being called. There is clearly an attempt on the part of the government to change the image and to say, "We're listening." Let me tell you, if you want to contribute to that reformation of your image out there, then you will support an amendment that allows a committee to determine whether they want to add four days to the public hearings if in their opinion a significant number of people who want to be heard wouldn't be heard, and it can be done in a way that does not affect at all the time frame.

I don't think there is much more that can be said about that. I have attempted to stress the reasonableness of my approach with this amendment. It is not something that puts you off-kilter or delays anything. It allows for more public input if in the committee's opinion that is required to deal with the volume of interest. Your reasonableness will be judged by your response to that. At that point I will wind up my comments on the motion to amend.

**Mr Klees:** I would like to take just a couple of minutes and respond to the member for Beaches-Woodbine on her comments, as well as her proposal of an amendment. I would just like to remind the member, as well as members of this House, that the intent of the government is clearly to ensure that we have meaningful hearings and to ensure that we give adequate time for input. We understand her sentiment, and I, as the parliamentary assistant, will commit to this: Not only will we give serious consideration to input that we get during those public hearings, but there will also be opportunity for written submissions to be made. All members of this House are available to people who want to provide further input. Certainly I and my colleagues and the minister will be available over the next number of weeks for further submissions.

I see no reason why the proposal before the House today would not accomplish the intent the member for Beaches-Woodbine is seeking to accomplish without going to this amendment she has tabled at this time. It would not be my intention to support the amendment the member has made. I am confident that we will achieve the same degree of consultation the member is seeking without that amendment.

**Mr Bradley:** I think the debate expresses what we in the Liberal Party have expressed and asked the government to do: to provide significant additional time for people to have input into the process.

The reason it's a reasonable request at this point in time is that we now have the final version of the government's previous consultation, limited as it was, and that is the bill itself. People will need the opportunity to comment on the final version of the government's thinking on this

issue. It seems to me if you limit it to four days of full-day hearings — keep in mind the two other days of hearings in Toronto will be about two and a half hours — we are not going to have that kind of input.

This bill enjoys in its principle probably some considerable support in the province. I and other members of the opposition see some merit in a significant number of the provisions of this bill, but we believe it can be substantially improved if you give the people of Ontario, through public hearings across the province, that additional opportunity to have input into the process.

You are shortening this process — the debate in this House — and as I indicated in my remarks previous to the amendment being placed before the House, I happen to believe that the bill can be improved if you are going to hear from more people in more communities and in more circumstances. If you truly want to consult, if you truly want to get that input, I believe you will acquiesce to this very reasonable amendment that has been placed by the member for Beaches-Woodbine and is supported by the Liberal Party. Or if you wish to take the initiative yourself, I am sure she is not simply looking for the credit of putting this forward. If you want to adopt it yourself as a government amendment, I'm sure the member for Beaches-Woodbine would be delighted to see that happen.

**Ms Lankin:** Absolutely.

**Mr Bradley:** We will give you the credit for that additional allocation of time for input. I will certainly rise in the House to provide that kind of credit.

If you do not do so, we can only draw a legitimate conclusion that you want to severely limit the amount of input on this bill and that the minds of the people who really run the government, the advisers to the Premier, are made up and that you're not going to seriously consider the input from those who will take the time, effort and energy to appear before the committee in various communities. That would be indeed unfortunate.

There will be people who will say you are arrogant as a result, that you are not open to new suggestions. The line you have all been given by the Premier's office to use is that anybody who disagrees with you is for the status quo. I know they give out these little lines — they're called the talking points for government members — and you talk about status quo, the lost 10 years. Any of the sayings I hear coming from members right across the government I understand are the talking points, which almost make parrots out of government members. It's unfortunate but it does. Some of the members don't use those lines and I admire those who don't automatically use those lines.

I look to a nod of acquiescence from the government House leader to this very reasonable amendment. We will certainly be supporting it and I would say it would be virtuous for the government House leader to do so.

**Ms Lankin:** Mr Speaker, on a point of order —

**The Speaker:** Let me just check. It's after 6 o'clock.

**Ms Lankin:** You're not in the vote yet.

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker:** I know that clock, but we go by this clock.

**Ms Lankin:** I was trying to get on before 6 o'clock.

**The Speaker:** Okay, point of order, the member for Beaches-Woodbine.

**Ms Lankin:** I will make it very brief. The reason I was trying to do it before you moved to votes is because I knew afterwards it would be after 6 of the clock.

It's with respect to, on Orders and Notices, order number 33, which is the time allocation motion with respect to Bill 109. I raise it now because it was only printed in Orders and Notices today and I was afraid that by Monday it would not be a timely point of order.

I was wondering if you could provide to the House next week some sense of the parliamentary process and history with respect to three readings of the bill. This particular time allocation motion provides that there will be no debate or no input on the part of members of the Legislature at third reading. It goes straight to the vote. I was wondering if you could review parliamentary precedent, because I believe third reading is an opportunity and is an attempt to have on the record of the Legislative Assembly those changes that have been made to the bill since the first presentation of the bill to the House. In fact there should be time, even if it's limited. It should not be allowed under a time allocation motion to proceed straight to a vote. I'm wondering if you would at least look into that.

**The Speaker:** Let me just say quickly —  
*Interjection.*

**The Speaker:** It's okay, government House leader. The fact is it's only on the order paper. It hasn't been called. Until the motion is called, it's not in order to stand on a point of order.

**Hon David Johnson:** She has risen, and I would say there is a correction that has to be made in the sense that nowhere in motion 33 does it say there cannot be third reading debate on Bill 109.

**The Speaker:** Okay, we're into the debate at this point. That's the point of order. I appreciate that but I didn't know the point —

**Hon David Johnson:** The point she has made is incorrect. I just wanted to correct the point she was making.

**The Speaker:** Okay. The point of order should be raised when the motion is called. It hasn't been called. It's simply on the order paper, so it's not properly before this House.

Ms Lankin has moved that government notice of motion number 32 be amended by adding the following paragraphs:

"That all members of the standing committee on social development be provided with a list of organizations and witnesses who have requested to appear before the committee, and how many were denied that opportunity due to lack of time;

"That such report be delivered prior to the commencement of the first public hearing and that the committee be authorized to conduct an additional four days of public hearings during the recess should the committee be informed that a significant number of Ontario citizens would be otherwise denied the opportunity to appear before their

elected representatives and provide their assessment of Bill 142."

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

I declare the motion lost.

Mr Johnson has moved government notice of motion number 32. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

I declare the motion carried.

#### BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

**Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Government House Leader):** I have

the weekly business statement. Pursuant to standing order 55, I wish to indicate the business of the House for the week of September 8, 1997.

Monday, September 8, Bill 148, the City of Toronto Act.

Tuesday, September 9, Bill 109, Local Control of Public Libraries Act, and Bill 152, Services Improvement Act.

Wednesday, September 10, Bill 140, Financial Services Commission of Ontario Act, and Bill 128, Uniform Federal and Provincial Child Support Guidelines Act.

Thursday, September 11, private members' public business, ballot items 95 and 96, and Bill 152, Services Improvement Act.

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** It now being after 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock on Monday.

*The House adjourned at 1805.*

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO**  
**ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO**

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon / L'hon Hilary M. Weston

Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Chris Stockwell

Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers

Clerk Assistant / Greffière adjointe: Deborah Deller

Clerks at the Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Algoma	Wildman, Bud (ND)	Frontenac-Addington	Vankoughnet, Bill (PC)
Algoma-Manitoulin	Brown, Michael A. (L)	Grey-Owen Sound	Murdoch, Bill (PC)
Beaches-Woodbine	Lankin, Frances (ND)	Guelph	Elliott, Brenda (PC)
Brampton North / -Nord	Spina, Joseph (PC)	Halton Centre / -Centre	Young, Terence H. (PC)
Brampton South / -Sud	Clement, Tony (PC)	Halton North / -Nord	Chudleigh, Ted (PC)
Brant-Haldimand	Preston, Peter L. (PC)	Hamilton Centre / -Centre	Christopherson, David (ND)
Brantford	Johnson, Ron (PC)	Hamilton East / -Est	Agostino, Dominic (L)
Bruce	Fisher, Barbara (PC)	Hamilton Mountain	Pettit, Trevor (PC)
Burlington South / -Sud	<b>Jackson, Hon / L'hon Cameron</b> (PC) Minister without Portfolio (seniors issues) / ministre sans portefeuille (affaires des personnes âgées)	Hamilton West / -Ouest	Ross, Lillian (PC)
		Hastings-Peterborough	Danford, Harry (PC)
		High Park-Swansea	Shea, Derwyn (PC)
		Huron	Johns, Helen (PC)
		Kenora	Miclash, Frank (L)
Cambridge	Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Kingston and The Islands / Kingston et Les Îles	Gerretsen, John (L)
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		Kitchener-Wilmot	Leadston, Gary L. (PC)
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Chatham-Kent	Carroll, Jack (PC)	Lambton	Beaubien, Marcel (PC)
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Cochrane South / -Sud	Bisson, Gilles (ND)	Lawrence	Cordiano, Joseph (L)
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Oriole	Vacant	Scarborough North / -Nord	Curling, Alvin (L)
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		Yorkview	Sergio, Mario (L)
		York South / -Sud	Kennedy, Gerard (L)

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Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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Richard Patten, Bruce Smith, Bud Wildman  
Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

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of Ontario**

First Session, 36<sup>th</sup> Parliament

**Assemblée législative  
de l'Ontario**

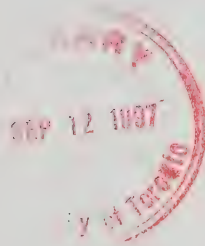
Première session, 36<sup>e</sup> législature

**Official Report  
of Debates  
(Hansard)**

**Journal  
des débats  
(Hansard)**

**Monday 8 September 1997**

**Lundi 8 septembre 1997**



**Speaker**  
Honourable Chris Stockwell

**Président**  
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

**Clerk**  
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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 8 September 1997

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 8 septembre 1997

*The House met at 1334.*

*Prayers.*

### MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

#### LITERACY

**Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury):** Today marks International Literacy Day. It focuses attention on the fact that more than 1.7 million adults in Ontario lack the basic literacy skills necessary to handle the simple reading and writing tasks they encounter in their everyday lives. That translates into one out of every five adults.

The statistics are staggering. The highest levels in Canada are found among our youth from 16 to 25 years of age. Youth in Ontario scored below the national average.

Poor literacy skills are associated with higher unemployment rates, higher dependence on social assistance and higher crime rates. The Mike Harris government has done little to address this ever-growing concern. At a time when his government is making sweeping changes to our education system and to our social safety net, he is failing to address the root of the problem.

With all this evidence supporting the importance and need for accessibility to literacy programs, the Minister of Education and Training responded in the only way he knew how: His realigned priorities actually cut the funding to literacy programs across Ontario, which resulted in a net loss of 6.6% of the total funding.

Groups across this province, including Kristen Gunn from the Sudbury Community Literacy Program, should be commended for their efforts. They have struggled with a government which only pays lip-service instead of literacy service for the less fortunate individuals.

#### ARTHRITIS

**Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre):** September is Arthritis Month, and it's important as Arthritis Month goes on that we understand the effect of arthritis on our population.

While arthritis is often seen as a disease of the elderly, in fact it is not. The average age of onset is in the baby-boomer age, the 41-to-50-year-old group, and the Arthritis Society is warning us very seriously of the consequences of not supporting the kind of research that's necessary to deal with this disease.

Arthritis affects more Canadians every year than heart disease and cancer combined. Some 13% of the population is affected either directly or indirectly, 2.7 million work-days are lost each year due to restricted activity, and almost 2,000 people die each year directly as a result of arthritis or as a result of illnesses caused by medications to control the pain.

Arthritis is not just aches and pains. Arthritis is a very debilitating disease, and it is one which is increasing with our aging population.

During the month of September it is important for us to support the Arthritis Society as it looks for funding for research, because research alone will control this disease. Diet, exercise, all of the things we think of as controlling disease, will not help with this disease. Please support Arthritis Month.

#### LION DANCE FESTIVAL

**Mr John R. Baird (Nepean):** I rise today to share with the House a report on the beginning of a terrific new tradition in our province: the Lion Dance Festival.

In conjunction with Canada's Year of Asia Pacific, the first Toronto Lion Dance Festival was held at Nathan Phillips Square on Sunday, August 31. Despite overcast and sometimes rainy weather, more than 20,000 people from Toronto and across Ontario attended the event.

Lion dancing originated in China hundreds of years ago as a celebration of trade and economic prosperity. It is a form of dance based on the martial art of kung fu. The dancers themselves are not just performance artists but actually disciplined endurance athletes.

More than 500 athletes from Ontario, the United States and China made up the 28 teams which performed at the Labour Day weekend festival. Honoured guests at Lion Dance functions included many private and public sector event sponsors as well as representatives of the consular generals for the People's Republic of China, Japan and the Philippines.

The province of Ontario, through the Ministry of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism, supported this new initiative, and Don Mills MPP Dave Johnson served as the event co-chair. I wish to congratulate the organizers of the first Toronto Lion Dance Festival and look forward to the opportunity to invite the members to future Lion Dance festivals in Ontario.

1340

## CONDUCT OF MEMBER

**Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William):** The Minister of Education often talks about how shocked and appalled he is at any number of things. I was shocked and appalled on Friday to learn that the MPP for Halton Centre, Mr Terence Young, was standing in a secondary school yard, uninvited and unannounced, handing out letters to students to try and convince them that John Snobelen and Mike Harris are not hurting classroom education. The minister and the Premier were shocked and appalled that teachers might politicize the classroom, but they don't seem so shocked when one of their own politicizes the school ground.

What about the example Mr Young set in refusing to leave at the request of the principal? Hardly what the member for Halton Centre professes to believe about obedience and discipline. Maybe he needs to visit one of his colleague's boot camps to get a lesson in that regard. Let us not forget that this is the same member who has a private member's bill recommending stiff fines for students, teachers and principals who fail to follow rigid protocol.

Ironically, Mr Young shouldn't have had to do any of this. If Mike Harris's policies are good for education, the students will be the first to know, and they won't have to be told in a letter — and no letter will convince them that Mike Harris's cuts aren't hurting them, with large classes and no textbooks, and more to come.

Students know what is happening in education today. They know what \$533 million worth of cuts have done. The MPP for Halton Centre should have gone inside the classroom and asked the students what is happening to their education.

## PUBLIC LIBRARIES

**Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt):** Last Wednesday the government tabled a time allocation motion on Bill 109 — that's the public libraries bill — which to all intents and purposes would have meant that there would have been no third reading debate on this bill, something that I believe would be unprecedented for this Legislature. I understand now the government seems to be coming to its senses to some extent and will be allowing third reading debate on this bill tomorrow afternoon. We will wait and see if they change their minds yet again.

I want to say to the government that while I'm happy if they will allow third reading debate on this, I need to underscore for them that they are still not dealing with the essential problems that underlie this bill, the first of which is the removal from the legislation of the basic right that all of us now have to use libraries free of charges. They will of course claim that that protection will continue, but it will continue only in the regulations, where it can be changed much more readily than the basic protection that now exists in legislation.

Closer to home, I want to again remind the government members of something I thought they had given some indication of a willingness to change, but they still have not, and that is with respect to the governance of the Metropolitan Toronto Reference Library. This is a library that serves not just Metropolitan Toronto but indeed the entire province. There is consensus that it needs to continue to have its own governance structure rather than being amalgamated with the other library boards. I hope at least on that point the government members will come to their senses, the minister will come to her senses and bring in an amendment that will ensure that this library continues to be governed in —

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Thank you.

## ETOBICOKE ECONOMY

**Mr Douglas B. Ford (Etobicoke-Humber):** I rise today to highlight good news from my riding of Etobicoke-Humber. In a move to increase the productivity, efficiency and international competitiveness of its operations, Labatt Breweries Ontario recently announced a \$7.5-million capital investment in its Etobicoke operation.

The project, which focuses on upgrades to the brewery's two packaging lines, comes about as a result of an increase in worldwide demand for product from Labatt. Significantly, Labatt Breweries of Canada employs over 3,500 Canadians, including 1,100 in Ontario, 500 of whom are located in Etobicoke.

It is important to note that the project, expected to be completed in 1998, will increase the brewery's packaging productivity by 100%, while the new equipment will result in significant improvements to productivity of the brewery's two packaging lines. The announcement shows the confidence in growth being experienced throughout Ontario.

A great many projections for future growth of the economy in Ontario are also positive. The people of Etobicoke-Humber have my assurance that this government will continue to focus on initiatives to encourage more growth and opportunity across the province, just like that demonstrated by the people at Labatt's Etobicoke brewery.

This is true cooperation between management and the union at Labatt Breweries.

## ARTS AND CULTURAL FUNDING

**Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur):** The Ontario Liberal Party believes that culture matters in Ontario, but for the past two years arts, culture and heritage organizations and individual artists have watched helplessly as this government has sharply reduced its support for culture.

As a result, they're now pleading with Premier Harris to truly recognize the value of their contributions to the economic and spiritual health of Ontario. They have sent passionate testimonials to the good work being done bringing culture to their communities and of their efforts to both maintain and broaden Ontario's heritage.

This week Ontario artists are even presenting a slide show in the shadow of the Toronto International Film Festival which they hope throws light on what culture in this province means. This is but one visible gesture from an arts community crying out for a government that should be proud and supportive of their efforts and accomplishments, a government that must appreciate how important the arts are towards making Ontario a great place to live.

Today I am proud to stand in my place to present a motion signed by our leader, Dalton McGuinty, and all members of our caucus, calling on the government to declare a Culture Matters month in Ontario. This motion asks the government to recognize, promote and celebrate with pride the role of Ontario's art, culture and heritage communities.

I am sending the Premier a copy of this motion and I stand today to urge him and the members of his caucus to join us in this appreciation and celebration of arts, culture and heritage in Ontario.

Please, Mr Premier, be a true friend to the arts. Support this motion.

### PAY EQUITY

**Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine):** Today is a day of celebration for women right across this province. Think of this for a moment: Think of a dike. You know the story about the Dutch boy who goes up to put his finger in a hole? One of the things that happens when you do that is holes start springing up all over the place, and that's what's happening to the Harris government.

Today we got the news that part of Bill 26, that omnibus bill, that bill we told you you were moving on too fast, you didn't understand its implications and parts of it were downright discriminatory — guess what? The courts agree with us. Today the courts strike down the Tories' repeal of pay equity rights as unconstitutional. It is so exciting for women in this province.

You tried to take away proxy pay equity from the poorest-paid women in this province, and the courts have said it is discriminatory, it is unconstitutional and section J of Bill 26 is now no longer of any effect. Do you know what that means? That means \$418 million is going to have to be paid to women who had that owing to them. It means women are going to have a chance again for justice in this province. It means the New Democratic government's pay equity legislation will prevail, unless of course you decide you're going to appeal this. If you decide you're going to appeal to take away rights for women, you'll pay in the long run, and in the long run the government that will be re-elected will reinstitute that.

It's great day for women. It is a great day to celebrate. I'm glad to be able to share this with the Legislature.

### MOTHER TERESA

**Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener):** I rise today with sadness in my heart to pay tribute to a woman who many

people throughout the world viewed as a living saint, Mother Teresa, who passed away on Friday evening.

Mother Teresa, who said she saw God in every suffering human being, began her charity work with just a few helpers in a Calcutta slum five decades ago when she founded the Missionaries of Charity. Today the Missionaries of Charity order has more than 4,000 nuns and runs 517 orphanages, homes for the poor, AIDS hospices and other charity centres around the world.

Mother Teresa became known as the saint of the gutters. For her humanitarian, charitable and compassionate works, Mother Teresa was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Mother Teresa was revered by millions of people throughout the world of differing faiths, cultures, nationalities and races.

Pope John Paul II in his Sunday address said, "She leaves us the testimony of the love of God that transformed her life into a total gift to her brothers and sisters." In an emotionally shaking voice, the pontiff earlier stated: "Travelling tirelessly the streets of the entire world, Mother Teresa marked the history of our century. With courage, she defied life. She served every human being by always promoting dignity and respect."

Other world leaders are stepping forward to pay their tribute to this wonderful woman. The president of the United States, the president of Russia, Prime Minister Jean Chrétien, Président Jacques Chirac of France and the Queen have all paid their tributes to Mother Teresa.

India's government declared a day of national mourning and will accord the Nobel Peace Prize winner a state funeral. In comparing her with India's spiritual father of independence and champion of the dispossessed, Indian Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral stated: "We had Ghandi in the first half of the century to show us the path to fight against poverty and in the second half we have the mother to show us the path to work for the poor." Mother Teresa will be missed.

### REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

#### STANDING COMMITTEE ON GENERAL GOVERNMENT

**Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel):** I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on general government and move its adoption.

**Clerk at the Table (Ms Lisa Freedman):** The committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill 96, An Act to Consolidate and Revise the Law with respect to Residential Tenancies / Projet de loi 96, Loi codifiant et révisant le droit de la location à usage d'habitation.

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Shall the report be received and adopted?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. It will be a five-minute bell.

*The division bells rang from 1351 to 1356.*

**The Speaker:** All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

#### Ayes

Baird, John R.	Gilchrist, Steve	Sampson, Rob
Beaubien, Marcel	Hodgson, Chris	Shea, Derwyn
Boushy, Dave	Johns, Helen	Sheehan, Frank
Brown, Jim	Johnson, David	Snobelen, John
Chudleigh, Ted	Kells, Morley	Sterling, Norman W.
Cunningham, Dianne	Klees, Frank	Stewart, R. Gary
Danford, Harry	Mushinski, Marilyn	Tilson, David
Doyle, Ed	Newman, Dan	Tsubouchi, David H.
Ecker, Janet	O'Toole, John	Turnbull, David
Elliott, Brenda	Ouellette, Jerry J.	Villeneuve, Noble
Flaherty, Jim	Parker, John L.	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Ford, Douglas B.	Pettit, Trevor	Wilson, Jim
Fox, Gary	Preston, Peter	Witmer, Elizabeth
Froese, Tom	Ross, Lillian	Wood, Bob
Galt, Doug	Runciman, Robert W.	Young, Terence H.

**The Speaker:** All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

#### Nays

Agostino, Dominic	Cordiano, Joseph	Marchese, Rosario
Bartolucci, Rick	Curling, Alvin	Martel, Shelley
Bisson, Gilles	Duncan, Dwight	Martin, Tony
Boyd, Marion	Gerretsen, John	McLeod, Lyn
Bradley, James J.	Grandmaitre, Bernard	Morin, Gilles E.
Brown, Michael A.	Gravelle, Michael	North, Peter
Castrilli, Annamaria	Hoy, Pat	Patten, Richard
Christopherson, David	Kormos, Peter	Phillips, Gerry
Churley, Marilyn	Kwinter, Monte	Pouliot, Gilles
Cleary, John C.	Lankin, Frances	Silipo, Tony
Colle, Mike	Laughren, Floyd	Wildman, Bud

**Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers):** The ayes are 45; the nays are 33.

**The Speaker:** I declare the motion carried.

Pursuant to the order of the House dated June 2, 1997, the bill is ordered for third reading.

## INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

### REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF SUDBURY STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 1997

### LOI DE 1997 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LA MUNICIPALITÉ RÉGIONALE DE SUDBURY

Mr Bartolucci moved first reading of the following bill:  
Bill 156, An Act to amend certain statutes with respect to The Regional Municipality of Sudbury / Projet de loi 156, Loi modifiant certaines lois en ce qui concerne la municipalité régionale de Sudbury.

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Bartolucci, short comments?

**Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury):** Very short comment: I introduced this bill to allow the chair of the region to be

elected by the people of the region in the next municipal election rather than being appointed by regional councillors. Clearly this is a perfect time to introduce the bill. The people, through their municipal representatives, have said they want to be able to vote for the chair of the region.

A delegation from the regional municipality of Sudbury headed by Councillor John Fera will be coming down to visit the minister. I look forward to working with Councillor Fera and the other delegation members to ensure that this change takes place and that the Harris government will listen to what regional council and I have said and let the people decide.

## MOTIONS

### HOUSE SITTINGS

**Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Government House Leader):** I move that, pursuant to standing order 9(c), the House shall meet from 6:30 pm to 9:30 pm on Tuesday, September 9, 1997, and Wednesday, September 10, 1997, for the purpose of considering government business.

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? All those in favour, please say "aye." All those opposed, please say "nay." In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members; it will be a 15-minute bell.

*The division bells rang from 1402 to 1417.*

**The Speaker:** All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

#### Ayes

Baird, John R.	Hastings, John	Runciman, Robert W.
Beaubien, Marcel	Hodgson, Chris	Sampson, Rob
Boushy, Dave	Jackson, Cameron	Shea, Derwyn
Brown, Jim	Johns, Helen	Sheehan, Frank
Chudleigh, Ted	Johnson, Bert	Snobelen, John
Cunningham, Dianne	Johnson, David	Sterling, Norman W.
Danford, Harry	Kells, Morley	Stewart, R. Gary
Doyle, Ed	Klees, Frank	Tilson, David
Ecker, Janet	Maves, Bart	Tsubouchi, David H.
Elliott, Brenda	Mushinski, Marilyn	Turnbull, David
Fisher, Barbara	Newman, Dan	Vankoughnet, Bill
Flaherty, Jim	O'Toole, John	Villeneuve, Noble
Ford, Douglas B.	Ouellette, Jerry J.	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Fox, Gary	Parker, John L.	Wilson, Jim
Froese, Tom	Pettit, Trevor	Witmer, Elizabeth
Galt, Doug	Preston, Peter	Wood, Bob
Gilchrist, Steve	Ross, Lillian	Young, Terence H.

**The Speaker:** All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

#### Nays

Agostino, Dominic,	Curling, Alvin	Martin, Tony
Bartolucci, Rick	Gerretsen, John	McLeod, Lyn
Bisson, Gilles	Grandmaitre, Bernard	Morin, Gilles E.
Boyd, Marion	Gravelle, Michael	North, Peter
Bradley, James J.	Hampton, Howard	Patten, Richard
Brown, Michael A.	Hoy, Pat	Phillips, Gerry
Castrilli, Annamaria	Kormos, Peter	Pouliot, Gilles

Christopherson, David  
Churley, Marilyn  
Cleary, John C.  
Colle, Mike  
Cordiano, Joseph

Kwinter, Monte  
Lankin, Frances  
Laughren, Floyd  
Marchese, Rosario  
Martel, Shelley

Sergio, Mario  
Silipo, Tony  
Wildman, Bud  
Wood, Len

**Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers):** The ayes are 51; the nays are 35.

**The Speaker:** I declare the motion carried.

#### COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

**Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Government House Leader):** I move that the following changes be made to the standing committees:

On the standing committee on administration of justice: Mr Ford, Mrs Ross, Mr Young, Mr Chiarelli, Mr Christopherson be removed;

On the standing committee on estimates: Mr Beaubien, Mr Sheehan, Mr Vankoughnet, Mr Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin), Ms Lankin be removed, and that Mrs Johns be substituted for Mr Kells;

On the standing committee on finance and economic affairs: Mr Barrett, Mr Carr, Mr Martiniuk, Mr Cordiano, Mr Martin be removed;

On the standing committee on general government: Mr DeFaria, Mr Doyle, Mr Stewart, Mr Gravelle, Mr Wood (Cochrane North) be removed;

On the standing committee on government agencies: Mr Ford, Mr Preston, Mr Tascona, Mr Bartolucci, Mr Kormos be removed, and that Mr Newman be substituted for Mrs Elliott and Mr Spina be substituted for Mr Guzzo;

On the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly: Mr Baird, Mr Johnson (Brantford), Mrs Pupatello, Mr Wildman be removed, and that Mr DeFaria be substituted for Mrs Marland, Mrs Ross be substituted for Mr Tilson, and that Mr North be added to the membership of the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly;

On the standing committee on the Ombudsman: Mr Johnson (Brantford), Mr Murdoch, Mr Ouellette, Mr Lalonde, Mr Marchese be removed, and that Mr Ford be substituted for Mr Leadston and Mr Vankoughnet be substituted for Mr Boushy and Mr Agostino be substituted for Mr Crozier and Mrs Pupatello be substituted for Mr Hoy;

On the standing committee on public accounts: Mrs Johns, Mr Murdoch, Mr Skarica, Mrs Pupatello, Mr Pouliot be removed, and that Mr Beaubien be substituted for Mr Shea;

On the standing committee on regulations and private bills: Mr Clement, Mr DeFaria, Mr Vankoughnet, Mr Kennedy, Mr Bisson be removed, and that Mr Leadston be substituted for Mrs Johns and Mr Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin) be substituted for Mr Gerretsen;

On the standing committee on resources development: Mr Jordan, Mr O'Toole, Mr Spina, Mr Agostino, Ms Churley be removed;

On the standing committee on social development: Mr Leadston, Mrs Munro, Mr Newman, Mr Patten, Mr

Wildman be removed, and that Mr O'Toole be substituted for Mr Parker.

**Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine):** Mr Speaker, on a point of order, and I am hoping you'll bear with me: This is a motion which has been brought forward, to the best of my knowledge, with no notice to the House. I think the question of whether it is a routine motion or a substantive motion warrants some discussion and some thought.

In the standing orders of the Legislature under "Routine Motions," it does indicate under section 34 a description of various types of routine motions, and contained therein is a reference to motions for changes in membership of committees. On the surface, what the government House leader has brought forward would appear to be simply a motion in changes of committee membership and therefore fall under routine motions. But I draw to your attention that under section 48 of the standing orders, the definition of "substantive motions" — of course, that is a motion which does require notice and which is therefore called as an order of the House and is debatable — includes within its definition "motions for the appointment of committees."

As you are aware, in the recent changes to the rules, under section XX, "Committees," under section 105, the process is set out in terms of how committees shall be established. Later on within that section, you'll remember that there were changes to the minimum number of members who could be on a committee.

I ask you to take a look at this in the context that the change in the rules was not simply to change the members or change one member for another, which is the normal kind of motion that's brought forward to change committee membership. The change in the rules was to constitute a new set of committees in this Legislature which have a limited makeup in terms of their number and limited representation from particular parties, most particularly the New Democratic Party, which goes from two representatives on every committee to one representative on every committee.

It strikes me that the government House leader is playing a little fast and loose with this as he brings forward a motion and attempts to disguise it as a motion simply to change membership. I would ask you to look, in the context of legislative precedent in this place, at how these motions are normally carried out and what the normal motion for a change in committee membership would constitute. I think if you look at precedents in the House, you will see that most of those motions would have the name of a member deleted from a committee and someone else added on to replace that member.

The motion before us today does not do that. The motion before us, in its majority at least, seeks to remove a number of members from a committee. I believe the intent is to constitute new committees and that the motion should properly be brought forward as a motion to constitute new committees. It therefore would be a substantive motion, would require notice, and would therefore be debatable.

I would say to you, Speaker, that on the face of the words in the standing orders under "Routine motions," "a change in committee membership," you could find that that's all this motion does by its words, on the face of it. But I think if you look at how matters have been dealt with in this House, how these issues have historically and traditionally been handled, any change of committee membership motion has been, as I said, one which seeks to remove someone from a committee and substitute another.

I hope you will take some time, after hearing arguments, to review this and consider that the government House leader has in fact intended to get around the rules of the House by disguising this as a change in membership when it truly is constituting new committees.

1430

**Hon David Johnson:** Mr Speaker, I'm not trying to get around any rules or procedures. In terms of the size of the committees, the new standing orders that were approved by this House do reflect on that, but as we all know, there was also a motion in October 1995 that indicated that "for the duration of the 36th Parliament, no standing or select committee shall consist of more than 14 members." The motion brought forward today is also in compliance with that direction.

The motion today does add members, does remove members and does replace some members with other members. As the whip from the third party has indicated, standing order 34 does permit, under "Motions," routine motions that include "motions for changes in the membership of committees." To my recollection, that has certainly been used in the past. So I think your research will find that has been the case, that we're doing here what has been done in many cases in the past.

We're not striking new committees. There are no new committees involved. All existing standing committees continue to operate; nothing new in that regard. All existing Chairs and existing Vice-Chairs of the committees will continue. Indeed, the membership after this motion has been put into effect will be about 87% of the members who were there before, in the sense that 87% of the members who were there before will be there afterwards. There are only some 13 substitutions; I guess 13% of the membership will be substitutions. So in large part the members who were there before are the members who will make up the committees when they're reconstituted.

This does provide a good continuity of the committee membership, but I think it also reflects on the fact that this is a routine motion, when you think that 87% of the members are the same.

*Interjections.*

**Hon Mr Johnson:** But of the new members, 87% were there before. Of the members who will be in place afterwards, 87% —

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Order. I ask the opposition benches to come to order, please. I'm trying to hear the government House leader's point of order. I listened carefully. I think they allowed the point to be made by the member for Beaches-Woodbine. I ask that the

same consideration be given. Member for Cochrane North, I think what I said was fairly clear. Thank you very much. Government House leader.

**Hon Mr Johnson:** The only reason I say that, Mr Speaker, is because if there is a portrait that is being painted that indeed this is quite different than what we had before, of the 101, I believe it is, members who will compose the committees in the future, 88 of them were on precisely those committees today and over the past several months. That I think speaks for the fact that this is routine in nature and should be considered in order.

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** I would take a different viewpoint from the government House leader. He might be surprised by that. There are occasions when the government House leader is right. This is not one of them, because clearly this is a substantive motion. It does, as the member for Beaches-Woodbine has appropriately pointed out, on the surface appear to be a routine motion, but indeed both of the opposition parties are substantially affected, more so than the government party, by this, because the two opposition parties are limited now to only three seats on these committees, two for the Liberals and one for the New Democrats.

This is a total reconstitution of the committees, in my view, and not simply a tinkering with existing committees. If it were simply a tinkering with the existing committees, the government House leader would be quite appropriate in making the argument that indeed this is a routine motion. This is a reconstitution of these committees. There are some significant changes to the makeup of these committees, not only in terms of the personnel but in the numbers that are permitted to be members of the committee from each party and the quorum which will be required in each case.

In addition to this — whether it's relevant to this point, I'll let you be the judge — the rules within the committees have been significantly changed as well so that their opportunity to carry out their responsibilities under the new rules — that ability is severely restricted in our view.

I think the member for Beaches-Woodbine has made a significant and accurate point and we hope you will give full consideration to that submission.

**Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma):** I won't belabour this, but the government House leader said this was simply a change in membership of committees and he emphasized that once that is accomplished, when you look at the membership, I think he said 87% of the members were the same on committees. In fact this is a reconstitution of the committees. He is making new committees according to the new rules: fewer members from the opposition and from the government.

Frankly, we reconstitute committees when new parliaments are established after an election. Oftentimes members of those committees were members of the same committee prior to the election campaign, if they've gained re-election. The fact that they're the same individuals doesn't matter; you're still reconstituting the committees.

In this case we've had a rule change. The rules require a different number for each committee and this motion is a substantive motion in that it is establishing new committees as per the new rules; therefore it is a substantive motion and can be debated and should have notice.

**The Speaker:** Allow me to take 10 minutes to recess and review.

*The House recessed from 1435 to 1513.*

**The Speaker:** We are faced with a situation that is fairly unique. I must decide whether or not what we are dealing with today is a routine motion. The standing order says that a motion that changes committee membership is a routine motion. Our practice has clearly been that routine motions of this nature have been simple substitution motions. In my view, the motion before us seeks to do more than this. It is a motion that changes the number of members and adds the participation of an independent member. I find therefore that the motion does not fit within the definition of "routine" and will require notice.

It's time for oral questions.

**Mr Bradley:** Mr Speaker, on a point of order: Could you tell us when question period will end today?

**The Speaker:** At 4 o'clock.

**Mr Bradley:** So it will be a 45-minute question period?

**The Speaker:** Yes, it will.

**Mr Bradley:** Abbreviated, okay. Thank you.

**Mr Wildman:** Mr Speaker, on a point of order: Just for clarification, the import of your ruling is that the government will have to give notice of such a motion if it is to call it again?

**The Speaker:** Yes.

## ORAL QUESTIONS

### YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT

**Mr Joseph Cordiano (Lawrence):** I have a question for the acting leader of the government, the Chair of Management Board. Minister, there's no one in Ontario today who doesn't believe that there is a crisis with youth unemployment. Even the Premier acknowledged this. No matter how much you would like to manipulate the numbers, too many young people in this province are unemployed.

Over the course of this past summer, the Premier said he would like to make youth employment a priority of his government. I want to ask you, was the Premier just saying that or has someone over there finally taken responsibility for tackling this issue? Who is it going to be: the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Education, the Minister of Economic Development? Is anyone over there going to take responsibility for our young people? Who is it going to be, Minister?

**Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Government House Leader):** First of all, I'd like to say that I'm delighted to indicate that in the month of August, the month that has just gone by,

Ontario gained more jobs in the youth area, some 16,600 new jobs in Ontario for youth.

This is particularly interesting because across all of Canada there were some 11,000 jobs created for youth, which clearly indicates that unfortunately there was a net decline in other provinces, but in Ontario 16,600 new jobs for youth. Nevertheless, a great deal more needs to be done. I know that the Premier is committed to this and that this government is committed to initiatives for young people. This will be a topic of discussions at the annual premiers' conference, and the Premier of Ontario will be taking a leadership role in that.

**Mr Cordiano:** Let's talk about what this government is doing. Your summer youth initiatives cut the number of hours and the number of weeks worked by students, and 20% of all students couldn't even find a summer job this past summer. This added to tuition fees that have increased by 30% since you've taken office, so that now students are facing debt loads approaching \$40,000 — a huge amount of debt on the backs of students. Tuition fees in Ontario are the second highest in the country and funding for universities is the lowest. That's a shame.

Is that what the Premier meant by saying that he would make youth initiatives a priority? Is that what he really meant, saddling youth with this kind of debt and closing off the option of going on to post-secondary education and precluding any possibility for summer employment? Is that what he meant when he said, "I'll help young people in this province"?

**Hon David Johnson:** This government has been dedicated to helping young people. Indeed, there have been initiatives this year involving 140,000 young people, which is 49,000 more than last year. The numbers are increasing and the assistance is increasing to young people. I find it interesting that the province of Ontario spends two and a half times as much money on youth as does the Liberal federal government in Ottawa.

**Mr Cordiano:** Minister, we're fast approaching the day in Ontario when the only winners will be those students who have wealthy parents. The only message you're sending to our young people is: "Get an education, you get into debt, and if you can't afford it, tough. Join the unemployment lines."

Tomorrow a group of students will be here in the Legislature with a petition protesting university cuts and tuition increases. Five thousand students signed that petition. Minister, it's obvious that no one in this government, in your cabinet, will stand up and take responsibility for youth and their plight. I've got to ask you: How can your government continue to ignore the plight of young people in this province with such high unemployment levels, tuition fees going through the roof and a debt that's going to be loaded on to the backs of students? They can't afford it in the future. I want to ask you, how do you intend to help young people in this province?

**Hon David Johnson:** I find it interesting that the member for Lawrence comments on tuition fees when apparently during the Liberal regime tuition fees rose by 35%. Nevertheless, this is an issue that we all need to take

seriously in this House. The plight and situation and condition of our young people, the people who are going to be the future of this province, is a very serious issue. It's an issue that the Premier takes most seriously and this government takes most seriously.

The member says we haven't done a thing: the summer program this year, some 40,000 positions for summer employment, the 10% tax credit introduced in the budget for employers hiring young people, some 45,000 jobs over three years through the tax credit program. This government has taken initiatives in summer employment: 40,000 students; the tax credit, 45,000. More needs to be done —

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Thank you.

1520

### FIRE IN HAMILTON

**Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East):** My question is for the Minister of Health. On August 22 you told the Hamilton Spectator, "If authorities and officials charged with public trust to maintain health recommend an inquiry, I think politicians would be obliged to listen." On Friday, September 5, a media release from the region of Hamilton-Wentworth states, "The medical officer of health supports council's resolutions and welcomes any recommendations resulting from a public inquiry which could assist and respond to a similar incident of this nature in the future." In view of this now, will you stick to your commitment, your word, and recommend today to the cabinet a public inquiry into the Plastimet fire?

**Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health):** I refer the question to the Minister of the Environment and Energy as lead for this issue.

**Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Environment and Energy):** I have not received a letter or a request from the medical officer of health to hold an inquiry nor has she forwarded any evidence to me that there was any wrongdoing, any problem with regard to what has happened at the site. We are continuing to answer questions of the public with regard to this matter and we will continue to do that in the future.

**Mr Agostino:** I just sent the minister a copy. Now he's got a few seconds to look at the release from the region on Friday. I find it astonishing that you would hang the Minister of Health out to dry the way you have. Your Minister of Health came forward on August 22 and said that if the health department of MOH called for an inquiry, he in effect would support it. You said on Thursday you would consider that. Now you're basically saying that it doesn't matter what the Minister of Health says, you're not going to listen to him.

If you're not going to listen to your own Minister of Health, let me suggest to you that we now have the opposition party, the Liberals; David Christopherson, the member for Hamilton Centre in the NDP; firefighters; OPSEU; regional council — I just spoke to Terry Cooke, regional chairman, again to reinforce that; city council; community organizations.

Minister, you were sent a letter at the end of July by your member for Hamilton Mountain asking you to call a public inquiry into the fire. You have all three political parties in the House, including your own members. We have the medical officer of health. What else are you waiting for? Will you do what the Minister of Health said on August 22 and call a public inquiry today?

**Hon Mr Sterling:** I am waiting for evidence that there is some wrongdoing or some misinformation or something wrong with regard to somebody's conduct during this, whether it be the firemen, the medical officer of health, the Ministry of Environment or anybody else. You don't call an inquiry for fun; you call it because there is some evidence of wrongdoing with regard to some public official, and none has been presented to me. I ask the member, please present that evidence to me, sir.

**Mr Agostino:** The evidence is over 100 firefighters who have been ill as a result of the fire. The evidence is residents who have been ill as a result of the fire. The evidence is a community that still doesn't understand what happened. The evidence is your equipment getting there 12 hours late. The evidence is an evacuation administered four days after.

What else do you need to know, Minister? There are hundreds of questions that I've asked, that the member for Hamilton Centre and the community have asked, and you have failed to come forward. You are totally gutless in dealing with the situation. You are afraid. You are scared to call a public inquiry because it will show a fault on your ministry's part, it will show a fault in the way public officials handled this.

You said, "I've said in the past that I'm not frightened of an inquiry." Show today you have the intestinal fortitude. Show today you have a commitment to the environment. Do the right thing: Back up your Minister of Health; back up your member for Hamilton Mountain; call a public inquiry. Otherwise, you've simply got to continue to run and hide. But you're not going to get away, because we're going to keep coming after you. Call a public inquiry today.

**Hon Mr Sterling:** I'm not running. I'm not hiding. I'm here to answer the question. I'm here to answer those hundreds of questions which you have not forwarded to me, Mr Member. If you want to represent the people of Hamilton and if you are concerned about the health of the people of Hamilton, please send to me your specific questions. I am more than willing, as I know the Minister of Health and any other member of this government are willing, to answer your questions and those of the people of Hamilton. We want to assure them that their health is not in jeopardy, that we have acted properly and will continue to do that.

### PAY EQUITY

**Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River):** I have a question to the Minister of Labour. Minister, for the past two years you've been bulldozing the rights of working women and men across this province. You've been in such a hurry

that you wouldn't listen to anyone and you didn't care about what mistakes you made or who you were hurting.

Now the Ontario Court of Justice has taken a dramatic step and told you to listen. It has ruled unconstitutional that part of your omnibus Bill 26 that tried to take away pay equity rights from the lowest-paid women in this province. The court decision is great news for those 100,000 women. It means they get the \$400 million a year that you tried to take away from them.

My question is this: Don't you think it's time you started to listen to people and consider the results of what you're doing? In this case, don't you think you should listen to the court and the law and pay the lowest-paid women in this province the money they're due?

**Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Labour):** I would certainly take exception to the words that we're attempting to bulldoze and we're not listening. We are, I can assure you, listening very carefully and we are endeavouring to build an economic environment in our province which will allow all women to benefit from the new job creation opportunities. Last month we created 33,000 new jobs.

I would also indicate to you that we are going to carefully take a look at the court decision, and obviously we will make some decisions.

**Mr Hampton:** This shows just how out of touch this minister is. Minister, you should read this court decision. You should read it, because this is what the judge says: He says that the pay equity law that was enacted by our government was enacted after years of careful study with pilot tests, extensive consultation and very careful consideration. Then the judge points out that your government acted in the absence of any study. He points out that you terminated the full-scale review of pay equity that had been started, that you acted without any awareness that you might be in effect acting in a way contrary to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, that you didn't even consider how much you were going to hurt the poorest-paid women in this province.

Minister, have you learned anything? Are you going to obey the court and obey the law and obey the Charter of Rights and Freedoms?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** I simply want to indicate that we remain very strongly committed to the principle of pay equity. In fact, it was our government that committed up to \$500 million to pay equity, the largest amount of money any government has ever committed to pay equity, and we will continue to carefully examine all the issues before us. As I said before, we are creating in this province an environment that will allow women to move ahead and have job opportunities.

1530

**Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale):** What we wanted to hear from you today was that you were going to pay this money out, not appeal it. You don't listen to the people of Ontario, and you're showing today that you're not even listening to an important court decision. The judge said, let me remind you, your government made no effort to explain

why the lowest-paid women in Ontario should take on the whole burden of your cuts.

Further serious attacks on pay equity are now pending in your Bill 136. This decision makes it very clear that the sections of Bill 136 that roll back even more pay equity rights for women should be withdrawn immediately. Will you commit today that this government, led by you, will withdraw these sections and finally stop its attacks on women in this province?

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** I hope the Minister of Health was kidding when he said that.

**Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health):** Yes, Mr Speaker.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Obviously, the ruling was only received late Friday. Our ministry will be carefully examining the ruling and we'll have an opportunity then to make a decision as to what future action will be taken.

#### DISTRICT HEALTH COUNCILS

**Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River):** My next question is to the Minister of Health. We found out this weekend that you're eliminating one half of the district health councils across Ontario and the new health planning areas are so large as to be absurd. For example, in northwestern Ontario the new planning area is the size of Poland, the size of Italy, the size of Great Britain, with literally dozens of communities in it.

At the very time that your hospital closing commission is cutting and closing hospitals in community after community, at the very time when people in those communities need someone to speak up for local health care concerns, now you're going to put the knife to the only body that can do that: the district health council.

Minister, do you know what you are doing? Why are you putting the knife into the district health councils now, at the very time when local communities need them the most, need them to speak up for local health care, need them to conduct local health care planning? Why are you doing this now?

**Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health):** The decision was made and was conveyed to the district health councils one year ago in London, Ontario, at their action centre, when all the DHCs in the province — in fact, there was a very strong round of applause when I personally announced that the DHCs would be reduced significantly in the province. The people who are doing the planning realize that with 33 district health councils and the money available for administration today, there is not enough money in any one area to do full, comprehensive planning.

Our commitment is that we'll have fewer administrators, like we're asking the rest of the system, but more money in planning. We're not going to drive all the savings back to the ministry. Money is going back into the 16 remaining district health councils so they can hire more planners and do more comprehensive planning on a wider range, in a wider geographical area, all in the best interests of good planning for the patients.

**Mr Hampton:** No one believes what you're saying. You called the district health council reps in here last Thursday and you told them that you were putting the knife to district health councils. That's what you did.

This is what is really going on out there: Your hospital closing commission admitted in July that they didn't have any idea about how many long-term care beds are needed; they didn't know how many home care spaces are needed; they didn't know how much or what kinds of community mental health services are needed at the local community level.

Across Ontario, people are starting to question your commission's numbers, starting to question its conclusions and starting to question the kinds of dollar assumptions it's making. In fact, in Ottawa the district health council has had to test all the so-called numbers that your hospital closing commission put forward.

Isn't that what this is really about? Your hospital closing commission is running into trouble in community after community. Now you're going to do away with the district health councils, the only people who can speak up.

**Hon Mr Wilson:** That's a pretty farfetched scenario. Let me read a quote from the local chairman of the Ottawa district health council in the Ottawa Sun of September 6: "Dr Bill James, an Ottawa paediatrician, said the ministry essentially rubber-stamped a plan agreed to by all the affected health councils."

Let me read to you a quote from an area of the province you should be very interested in, from the chair of the Cochrane District Health Council, Jean-Paul Aubé, who says: "Let me begin by thanking you for removing the uncertainty that has been with us for the past few years. This change is consistent with the evolution DHCs have undergone over the last 25 years."

"Although the restructuring will result in larger planning areas," he goes on to say, "the changes which you have announced today will improve planning, the ultimate benefactors of which should be the patients."

I have letters from every district health council in the province, if you'd like me to go on and on. They developed this plan over the years. DHCs were brought in by the Bill Davis government. This is a natural part of their evolution. It has nothing to do with the Health Services Restructuring Commission. The very fact that we had to set up a commission to do the restructuring shows that more planning —

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Final supplementary. The member for London Centre.

**Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre):** Thank you, Minister, for being very clear that this is part of your revolution and that what you're doing is destroying local input again and again. You're destroying the community of interest for people by mixing together widely disparate parts of the province. We see the hospital commission dumping all of the services into great big corporate structures and away from community-based hospitals.

You very reluctantly agreed to our amendment in your Bill 26 that required you to have reference to the district

health councils when this planning was going through for restructuring. Is this your way of completely subverting what this Legislature agreed to; that district health councils, with this broad experience they're going to have with hospital closings, are not going to be able to represent the local community of interest? It's another nail in the coffin of communities that are trying to save their health system. Don't try to quote the words of your sycophantic appointments to district health councils as an —

**The Speaker:** Thank you. Minister?

**Hon Mr Wilson:** On the one hand I am supposed to listen to these communities, and I do. I think the honourable member should give an apology right now to district health councils. These are people who get paid no money; they're volunteers. If you had allowed them when you were in government and gave them the tools to do the planning, the health care system would be integrated today, we probably wouldn't have had to set up a commission in the first place, and everyone would be singing from the same hymn book in our health care system.

You held them back. You didn't give them the tools to do the jobs. We're going to increase their core budgets and we're going to make sure they have the tools to do planning so that when we get plans from the local communities, those plans will get us down the road to an integrated health care system.

I think you owe an apology to the people who serve on our district health councils, who are the ears, eyes and conscience of the government and the people of Ontario and who are trying their very best to plan for the patients of Ontario. Get up and apologize today.

## EDUCATION FINANCING

**Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William):** My question is for the Minister of Education. In two meetings with representatives of Ontario teachers it was made absolutely clear that a non-negotiable bottom line for your government is getting the cost of education down to what you call the national average.

That takes us right back to your boast that you could take more than \$1 billion out of Ontario education. You used inaccurate figures. You came up with a statement that we were 10% above the national average in our spending, and you said you could save \$1.3 billion by taking us down to that phoney average.

Why are you so determined to take more than \$1 billion out of education in Ontario? Is your Premier really so desperate for money to pay for the tax cut that he's going to make students pay for it?

**Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training):** What is inaccurate, of course, is just exactly how the member opposite has put the question. I have not said the things she's said I have said, so once again, the member for Fort William is inventing things as we go.

I can say this, though: This government remains committed to two objectives in all the reforms in education, many of which have been waiting for some time to happen in the province. One of those is to have the highest student

performance in Canada. We think that's a worthwhile objective. The other is to provide that education at a real value to the parents, to the students and to the taxpayers. I am proud of both of those objectives, and we are moving forward on both of those objectives.

1540

**Mrs McLeod:** For the record, it was the Minister of Finance for this government who said that getting Ontario down to the national average would save \$1.3 billion. If that's an invented figure, it is your colleague the Minister of Finance, who is going to control your budget, who invented the figure. You're out to take the balance of that \$1.3 billion out and you made it a non-negotiable bottom line. You are consistent, but you are consistently wrong, in trying to take more money out of the classrooms of this province. It is clear that you want to make those cuts on the backs of the teachers, but you are going to be making them on the backs of students too. You have already taken \$533 million out of our classrooms, and we are seeing the effects of that, with classes so large there isn't room for all the students, classes with no textbooks, junior kindergarten disappearing, adult education programs disappearing. What is going to happen if you take \$750 million more out?

You have said in the past that one way to bring about change is to bankrupt the system, and you appear determined to do that with education. If you are serious about negotiations, if you care about education, will you abandon your goal of cutting \$1 billion out of education?

**Hon Mr Snobelen:** Let me assure the member for Fort William by saying once again in this chamber what I have said for the last almost two years, which is that we will make sure there is a funding system in place that meets the individual needs of every student in the province and we will spend whatever it takes to make sure that's the best-quality system in Canada. That's the promise and that's the commitment of this government and this minister. I have said it over and over again, and I hope today that you will hear it, because what we will not do is what your government did when you were in power, and that is have our students pay for their own education. The cost of education is put on their backs by running higher and higher deficits and putting that burden of debt on their shoulders, on their future — \$41,000 per student in this province. It's unconscionable. We will not do that. We are making the changes we must make for their future.

## YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT

**Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine):** My question is to the Chair of Management Board. Earlier I listened very carefully to your answer to the official opposition about the youth unemployment crisis that faces us here in Ontario, and I heard you spew out a lot of numbers. However, I hope that you would agree the bottom line is that there are 170,000 youth out of work in Ontario right now and that it is a shameful number and something needs to be done.

The federal government is supposedly today announcing an initiative. I think it's quite small, I don't think it's going to help a lot, but I think more should be done. I'm wondering if you have given any consideration to announcing any kind of similar program of a major expansion of internships within the Ontario government to allow young people an opportunity for a year of training, for a year of exposure to quite an incredible operation like the public sector and public policymaking. Can you add to what the federal government is doing to help address the crisis of youth unemployment in this province?

**Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Government House Leader):** I would say first of all that I agree with the member opposite that this is a problem and remains a problem. Notwithstanding the 16,600 new jobs, as I mentioned, for the young people last month and some 37,000 new jobs over the past four months, it still remains a problem that needs to be dealt with and encouraged.

The government is approaching the situation in the larger context of trying to encourage employment and investment in Ontario in general. To the degree that people invest in Ontario — because the tax rate is competitive, because the red tape is cut, because the deficit is eliminated in the province — for all those good reasons, then it will translate into jobs for young people.

I am more than prepared, and the government will be more than prepared, to take the federal announcement, have a look at it and see if there's some way we can work together.

**Ms Lankin:** There are a lot of numbers I could throw back at you, like the over \$22 million you cut from youth employment over this last year, from the Summer Experience programs and others. The bottom line is, and you've acknowledged it, that this is an incredible problem facing us. Your approach in terms of job creation overall: I haven't seen a lot of success yet, but I hope you're right. At this point in time, though, the difference between adult unemployment and youth unemployment ranges from 8% to over 16%. That approach is not going to address the unique problem of youth who are not getting an opportunity to get the training, who are not getting an opportunity to get work experience and therefore be able to go out and get those new jobs that you say are going to be created.

Minister, the program that is being announced apparently is an internship program. I would like to ask you to take up the challenge, match the federal government's program and take it a step further: Put together a committee of people — and I'll be willing to help — to go out to the private sector and encourage at least 3,000 private sector firms to take on those kinds of internship programs at all. Would you agree to work with us on that?

**Hon David Johnson:** This government is always interested in working with other levels of government, whether it's the federal government or the other provincial governments. Indeed, there is the premiers' conference coming up soon; the ministers of health are getting together and the ministers of consumer and commercial relations.

So we're always delighted with these kinds of working relationships.

When the member opposite says she hasn't seen any evidence of job growth in Ontario I'm a bit puzzled, because this year some 160,000 jobs have been created in the province. Since this government has come to office, about 220,000 people are off the welfare system in Ontario, most of them finding other employment. The employment opportunities have never been greater. There have never been more people working in the province. Your government lost jobs in Ontario when you were in office. This government is creating jobs through its policies, but we're always delighted to work with other levels of government to do even more.

#### AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

**Mr John O'Toole (Durham East):** My question is to the Minister without Portfolio responsible for privatization. Mr Sampson also led the government's auto insurance reform initiative.

I've received calls from a constituent who has just returned from a one-year stay abroad. My constituent has told me that because he was uninsured for a year, his former automobile insurer has told him he will have to pay higher rates. This seems blatantly unfair to both me and my constituent. I thought this was addressed as part of the auto insurance reform. I would ask the minister to provide an explanation for my constituent, myself and the people listening today.

**Hon Rob Sampson (Minister without Portfolio [Privatization]):** I don't know why his constituent was told that, because it's not true. In fact, Bill 59 was specifically designed so that Ontarians who have a lapse of coverage are not caught by this particular rule —

*Interjections.*

**Hon Mr Sampson:** — a particular a rule, by the way, that was put in place by my colleagues across the floor who are now barking at me.

I suggest to him that he inform his constituent that it is inappropriate for insurers to use a lapse of coverage as an underwriting rule. In fact, I have recently written insurers in Ontario instructing them and reminding them that it is not appropriate behaviour and should be stopped immediately.

**Mr O'Toole:** I'm shocked, quite frankly, but I'm pleased with your response.

My office occasionally gets calls from constituents who are displeased with the way the settlement of insurance claims is being processed and handled. Minister, could you outline what options are available to my constituents and their concerns or complaints regarding the insurance claim process?

**Hon Mr Sampson:** Because we felt that the consumer should be adequately covered and protected by auto insurance, we purposely required that insurers have within their own firm an ombudsman to deal with issues of concern. This is a new plan that we put in that previous governments felt was not appropriate or sufficient enough. We

felt it was important for Ontarians and insureds in Ontario to have somebody within the company to go to.

We also felt it was important that the industry association itself deal with problems relating to the industry of auto insurance.

Finally, as a last resort, we felt it was important that the Ontario Insurance Commission have within its own jurisdiction, within its own employment, an individual who will deal with questions and concerns raised by Ontarians relating to auto insurance. We put that plan in place for Ontario drivers because we think Ontario drivers deserve that. Apparently the people across the floor didn't feel that was appropriate.

1550

#### PUBLIC HOUSING

**Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt):** My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services. It has to do with her bill that's before the Legislature seeming to do what no one else has recommended, and that is to dump social housing on to property tax. The taxpayers of Ontario, at Mike Harris's insistence, paid for a major study to be done by a panel handpicked by Premier Harris. That handpicked panel studied this issue. That panel strongly — I use their language — opposes a move to putting social housing on property tax. They are unanimous in the view that it's a mistake. The Premier's handpicked panel said, "Don't do it." The taxpayers funded that study to look at this in detail.

My question to the minister is this: Can you assure the House today that you have talked to Mr Crombie, that you have reviewed with him his findings and that he now is in agreement with what the government's planning to do — dumping social housing on to property taxes?

**Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services):** As the honourable member well knows, the housing issue comes under the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. If he has not already talked to Mr Crombie, I'd be quite prepared to recommend to him that he do so. I myself have talked to Mr Crombie before about many of the recommendations he had made.

As the members of this House recognize, a number were made. At the end of the day, they realized that there were some significant problems with what they did. They had to go back and reissue some of their recommendations. Some of them we were prepared to accept, some of them we were not because of policy issues that we thought were important. For example, we did not want to contract out the delivery of social services. That was something we did not think was appropriate. I am sure, as we work through these issues with the implementation teams, the municipalities, we will be able to sort out any concerns they have.

**Mr Phillips:** Let's cut through the bafflegab and get an answer out of the minister here. It is your bill, Minister. Your name is on the bill. You are proposing to dump social housing on to the property tax. Nobody supports that. I go back to my question. I would like an answer.

Have you discussed this with the handpicked panel that Premier Harris selected to look into this issue? The taxpayers paid big tax dollars to fund that study. Have you discussed this recommendation with Mr Crombie? What is his response and why have you decided to go 100% against the recommendations of your own handpicked panel that says you are making a huge mistake? Can you give us a straight answer, Minister? Have you discussed it with Mr Crombie and why did he recommend 100% the opposite direction to where you're heading?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** As I said to the honourable member, I've certainly discussed Mr Crombie's recommendations with Mr Crombie. I can't answer for my colleague Minister Leach. I would be surprised if he hasn't. I'd be very prepared to discuss it again with Mr Crombie, but I would like to stress that of the many recommendations he put forward, there were some we felt we should not accept for some very valid policy reasons; one I mentioned earlier, about contracting out social services.

The other thing I think the honourable member is forgetting here is that municipalities are currently involved in social housing. One of the things we have recognized is that their involvement in the social safety net out there is working extremely well. We want to build on that strength. We recognize that there needs to be further financial support and further steps taken so that this transition of social housing can occur effectively, without causing problems for people who depend on this service. That's one of the reasons we are putting forward literally millions of dollars for them to assist in upgrading the stock of this housing; so this transition can take place very effectively.

### FIRE IN HAMILTON

**Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre):** My question is to the Minister of Environment and Energy. The need to clear the air over the Plastimet fire with an independent inquiry is becoming more obvious every day — obvious to almost everyone, that is, except you.

Despite mounting requests for an unbiased investigation into the toxic fire, you're still offering flimsy arguments against calling an inquiry that will get to the bottom of the problem. It's a shabby performance by a politician who gives the impression that you fear the government will be embarrassed by the results of a credible investigation into the fire and the mistakes that led up to it.

You certainly can't answer the litany of concerns and questions that linger about the fire and all its implications. It shouldn't be necessary for the people of Hamilton to drag you into an inquiry kicking and screaming. It's time for you to stop dithering and start putting the interests of Hamiltonians first, with a practical inquiry.

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Minister. Supplementary.

**Mr Christopherson:** I'm sorry, Speaker, what happened there?

**The Speaker:** He feels he's answered the question, so he's answered it. Supplementary?

**Mr Christopherson:** You know, Minister, you can't continue to treat everybody and every community and every entity that cares about this with this kind of arrogance. That's disgusting, to sit there and not even get up and account and answer for yourself.

I want you to know that what I read to you in my initial question was yet another editorial from the Hamilton Spectator today, calling for a public inquiry.

We've said to you from the outset that this isn't about politics. You've got the other opposition member, the member for Hamilton East — you wave your hand away — the local council, the regional council, the MOH that you asked to come on side, every one of them, and I might point out there are some very prominent Tories on that city and regional council level. Those people and all of us are calling on you. As I said, this is the third editorial from the Spectator — not a paper that has traditionally gone against most of your initiatives.

Minister, you've got no excuse, none whatsoever, except to further display your arrogance and your fear for a public inquiry. Stand up now and do the right thing. Say you'll give us what we deserve: a public inquiry.

**Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Environment and Energy):** I have said before to the other member from Hamilton who has questioned me on this, and to my own members, that we are anxious to answer any and all questions relating to this. This member has not sent to me one question that I can remember with regard to any of the matters relating to Plastimet.

We are as open as you possibly could be on this. My staff are working hard to clean up the site at the present time. The progress is going well with regard to it. We have informed the people in the community of what we are doing. We have a citizens' group. We have given the city \$40,000 to do their own independent assessment of it. We have done absolutely everything, but no one has brought one scintilla of evidence to me that anybody has done anything wrong in this.

### SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

**Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls):** My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. As you know, a major part of this government's platform was reform of the welfare system. Many of my constituents are still very concerned about reforming that system.

I noticed, reading the papers over the last few days, that you released the province's welfare caseload statistics. The good news is that there is a downward trend in the number of people dependent on welfare. I wonder if you can tell me today if the Niagara region follows the provincial trend.

**Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services):** I'm very pleased to report that the Niagara region has indeed followed the provincial trend. As you know, we've seen in the last two years an unprecedented decline — 16% fewer people trapped on welfare in this province — because of job growth and our welfare reforms. In the Niagara region, there has been a 25% de-

crease of people trapped on welfare — that's 7,000 fewer people — at a taxpayer savings of \$8 million. That's good news for the taxpayers in Niagara region and it's certainly good news for those individuals in Niagara who no longer have to rely on welfare and are out there in paid jobs, where they'd like to be.

1600

**Mr Maves:** It's good to know about the savings accruing to the region through that. I wonder if the minister can let the House know about savings accruing to the provincial government.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Yes, I'd be very pleased to do so. As well as the \$8 million that Niagara region has saved the taxpayers of Ontario, there has been a saving of over \$1.3 billion. I think that's a very good thing for the taxpayers of Ontario. But I would also like to stress that we went out last year and did a survey on these individuals who are leaving welfare — no other government had done this — to find out where they were going.

We found that the vast majority were going into paid jobs. That is what our welfare reforms are designed to do, to help those individuals off welfare and into the job market. That's where they want them to be and that's certainly where those of us who pay and support the system want them to be.

#### QUESTION PERIOD

**Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I note on the clock that the time has run out on question period. I'm assuming that the clerks have set the time in accordance with rule 30(b) which says:

"Time limit on routine proceedings

"(b) At 4 pm on any day on which the House has not commenced Orders of the Day, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and shall put every question necessary to dispose of the routine proceeding currently occupying the House and immediately call Orders of the Day."

I would like to raise a point of order, with three parts to it, with respect to this particular issue.

First, and I think this is a minor point, I would indicate to you that the hour on the clock for question period should have remained and that at 4 o'clock, if you felt that under this standing order you needed to interrupt the routine proceedings, you would do that as opposed to the clock having been reset.

Second, I would suggest to you that the reason question period began, I believe, around 3:15 — I'm sure the clerks would have an accurate record of that — the reason there was a delay, was because there had been a point of order raised and you felt the need to recess in order to rule on that point of order. I myself raised that point of order. I would think it is fair to say that it was not in any way dilatory; in fact, you found it to be a valid point of order and ruled in favour of the point I had brought forward.

As a result of the necessary time it took in order for you to make that ruling — and we of course saw that — question period began with only about 45 minutes left until the

4 o'clock time would be reached on the clock. That is a contingency that probably has not happened before or been thought of or provided for in the rules.

In that respect, I would like to make my second point to you. Under section 1(c) of the standing orders, "Conduct of Business," it indicates contingencies unprovided for. These are new rules; this is the first time this is being tested I believe.

"(c) In all contingencies not provided for in the standing orders the question shall be decided by the Speaker or Chair, and in making the ruling the Speaker or Chair shall base the decision on the democratic rights of members referred to in clause (b). In doing so the Speaker shall have regard to any applicable usages and precedents of the Legislature and parliamentary tradition."

If you look to the democratic rights of members that are set out, I would specifically ask you to look at 1(b)(iii), which is "to hold the government accountable for its policies." In particular, we know that the vehicle through which we most often attempt to do that is question period.

The second point I put to you is that in these circumstances a point of order was raised, a valid point of order — whether or not you had ruled in favour of the point of order, it was not in any way a dilatory action; it was a question to be determined, and the length of time it took for you necessarily to review that, as opposed to any actions on the part of any members of this Legislature, took ourselves into that magic hour before 4 o'clock arrived on the clock of the Legislative Assembly.

I would think that in this case, it being a contingency not provided for, you have some leeway as a result of this clause to determine whether or not it is in the interest of the democratic rights of the members of this Legislature to hold the government accountable for policies and therefore to be able to continue with question period for the allotted period of time.

The third argument I would like to make to you — and this is an argument in addition or in the alternative, whichever you may want to look at, but I think it's in addition — is that if you look at the wording of the rule which is at question here, time limit on routine proceedings, 30(b), it says, "At 4 pm on any day on which the House has not commenced orders of the day, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and shall put every question necessary to dispose of the routine proceeding currently occupying the House and immediately call orders of the day."

Mr Speaker, I would put it to you that if through the course of routine proceedings we were still, for example, dealing with motions — as you saw today, the government House leader introduced a motion with respect to evening sittings for the rest of this week. At that point in time, when the question was put, there was a division; there was a 15-minute bell. If we had been still in routine proceedings at this time, when 4 o'clock came — we were debating it, let's say — and it was necessary for you to put a routine motion to a vote, like such a motion under section 9 or under any other section, there would be, if there was a division, a requirement for the bells to ring. I don't believe

you would shortchange that just because it's 4 of the clock. You would take the steps necessary to dispose of the questions involved in that routine proceeding.

The argument I'm making to you is that the routine proceeding of question period is an hour by standard in this Legislature. It is an hour of questions of accountability to the government. It would seem to me that there is an argument that could be made that at 4 of the clock you could notify the members of the House that all the questions must be put and that there is an opportunity for the rest of the routine proceeding to be completed, either to the hour or in an opportunity for the members who had questions scheduled. I think the hour is the more important reference point for you, because it would be difficult on any given day, with interruptions, for you to know which of the members scheduled to ask questions would actually have been able to successfully get them on within the period of the hour. But I put that to you.

So the three points I raise are with respect to 30(b) and the rule on time limit on routine proceedings. First of all, there should not have been an automatic change in the timing of the clock. The routine proceeding was under way, and at 4 o'clock, had you felt or had it been drawn to your attention that it was necessary to interrupt the proceedings, that could have happened at that point.

Second, in the case we have before us today, there was a point of order. You recessed the House. You required that time. I don't take fault with the time that was necessary, but it took time away from the House proceedings in order to determine a valid point of order, and I think that's a contingency not provided for within the rules. Then I referred you to section 1(c) and the ability you have to make a ruling when a contingency is not provided for and that you "shall" base — there is no discretion — that decision on the democratic rights of the members referred to in clause 1(b)(iii), as I pointed out, "to hold the government accountable for its policies."

Thirdly, in addition or in the alternative, under 30(b), when 4 o'clock of the House arrives, it is necessary for you to put every question necessary to dispose of the routine proceeding. As I indicated, if we were currently in the middle of a motion and a question had to be put, the bells would ring; that length of time would take place. You wouldn't take away from that. I think there's an argument that you might be able to apply equally to the hour set aside for question period.

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** Again, I believe that valid points have been raised, Mr Speaker. In opposition, our concern about the change in the rules that we're now operating under, you will recall from many of our speeches, was that question period could be abbreviated, as it was today, if one were to interpret the new rules as they've been interpreted today, or second, that we might not even have a question period if there were any business that was to take place previous to question period, now that question period is relegated to seventh place instead of third place. The opposition is now in a position, as you will understand, that if we wish to contest anything

that takes place before question period, the danger is that question period is either abbreviated or eliminated.

Specific to the comments of the member for Beaches-Woodbine as to the clock, it would be certainly my preference, my understanding — I suppose I could put it that way — that 60 minutes should appear on the clock, and at 4 o'clock, whatever happens happens. But my preference would be that we show the regular number of minutes that would be available for question period, that being 60 minutes.

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I also want to look at the hope that you are able to exercise the kind of discretion which has been requested by the member for Beaches-Woodbine as it relates to question period. She put forward the valid point that if there were a vote that were taking place, you would complete that routine proceeding, and since in the view of the opposition — I'm sure many members of the House have sat in opposition before — question period is the most important routine proceeding — not routine proceeding but proceeding that we have in this House, I'll put it that way — it should be completed regardless of what the 4 o'clock stipulation may be on the part of the government.

I hope you will give serious consideration to the arguments that have been made by the opposition, because if not, I foresee days where we will not have a question period at all or indeed many days where question period will be abbreviated or, alternatively, the opposition will have to sacrifice any of the very valid points — I don't think one could say they were not valid points — that could be made by the opposition in that period preceding question period.

**Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Government House Leader):** In terms of the clock setting, I thought it was handled very effectively and efficiently. I think the members of this House deserve to know how much time is left in the House, and the way the clock was handled today clearly demonstrated how much time was left in terms of question period. It left no room for confusion on behalf of the members, for example, and I think clarified the situation, so I would applaud those who handled it in that direction.

In terms of the rest of the points, I guess really what we're debating here again is that some of the members in the opposition don't like some of the rules. We went through a long debate. I think we went through five days of debate — I think about three of them were till midnight — long, arduous debate about these points. They made many of these points over and over again. The government made some concessions back in June on some of the points, made some concessions more recently on some of the other points, yet they continue to not like some of the aspects of the standing orders.

At some point in time, the government has to be able to get on with the business of the House. Notwithstanding that they may not like some aspects, the standing orders were passed. I think they're working quite nicely. I think a lot more members of this House are able to get involved in

the debate, and I have heard that comment over and over again.

This may not be deemed to be a great situation for those in the opposition party who traditionally spent an hour and a half going on about —

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Government House leader, there is a point of order on the table. I really don't know how you are addressing it.

**Hon David Johnson:** I'm addressing it to say that this is really a continuation of the debate on the standing orders. The point in contention, clause 30(b), that has been raised by the member for Beaches-Woodbine, is clear: "At 4 pm on any day on which the House has not commenced orders of the day, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and shall put every question necessary," etc, and we carry ahead. It doesn't say that if there's a Speaker's ruling, for example, then we don't proceed at 4 o'clock, we do something else; it says at 4 o'clock we go to orders of the day.

The member opposite raises the issue of accountability. There isn't just accountability during question period. Accountability extends through all aspects of this House — through the committee hearings, through the debates on orders of the day, through members' statements. Accountability exists through every component of the time we spend in this House and in committee work, and much beyond.

The day has not been shortened. Indeed, we had a motion earlier today to lengthen the amount of time, to go from 6:30 to 9:30 to allow the members to speak. Surely if the member was to be consistent she would say that the accountability has been increased because the members have more time to debate more topics and therefore have more accountability to the people of Ontario.

I would submit that this is all in order and that we should proceed with orders of the day.

**Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma):** Point of order.

**The Speaker:** Member for Algoma, I don't want to cut anyone off. I'll hear all points of order. If they are not repetitious, it would be helpful, and succinct would also be helpful.

**Mr Wildman:** I'll be brief. I won't repeat the points made except to say one thing, and that is in response to the government House leader's statement that accountability is part of all the various debates in this House. That's quite true, but for him to argue that by having passed a motion as per the new rules to have additional time for debate in the evening, another day, if the government were really serious about wanting to extend accountability, they would have included in that rule the BC experience of an additional question period. Then we wouldn't be so concerned about cutting off the question period at 4 o'clock because we would have another question period in the extended debate.

I would also just point out that, in terms of the clock, I agree with my friend from Beaches-Woodbine and my friend from St Catharines that it is important for us to know how much time would have been available for the completion of the regular question period when 4 o'clock

occurs. Whatever your ruling, it might happen that for whatever reason members of the House might give unanimous consent to complete question period, and then it would be important for us to know how many minutes are left. So it is important that we know exactly how much the question period has been cut if this rule applies.

**Mr Peter L. Preston (Brant-Haldimand):** Look at the clock.

**Mr Wildman:** If we look at the clock we cannot tell if the clock is operated as the clock operated today. Therefore, I would suggest that makes sense.

I would also suggest that if the government members are serious about wanting to ensure accountability, they will appreciate that it is important for question period to be completed wherever possible and not to be truncated.

**Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William):** I will be very brief. I don't believe this is a debate about whether or not we like the new rules; we don't. The issue is really whether or not some aspects of the new rules, in ways perhaps not foreseen, are dysfunctional for the proper order of the House.

I believe, Mr Speaker, that it's incumbent on you in your role as Speaker, although you are clearly constrained by the law which passed these orders and put them into place, to ensure that they can operate to as great an extent as possible to preserve some democratic process in this place.

My concern, based on what happened today, is twofold: First, the arbitrariness of having to move to orders of the day at 4 o'clock will constrain members of the Legislature from raising points of order prior to that, even though the points of order may be legitimate, as the point of order raised today by the member for Beaches-Woodbine was. Even more serious, I think rigid interpretation of the 4 o'clock rule constrains you as Speaker and the time you take to make rulings on points of order. Obviously today I think it is constraining for you to take that degree of time, knowing that members' question period is being curtailed as a result of it.

I wonder if at the very least it isn't within your mandate within these rules to reserve judgement on points of order, if they don't immediately affect the routine proceedings, until routine proceedings have been completed.

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**The Speaker:** Thank you to the members whose submissions I did hear. First, I tend to side with the member for Algoma with respect to the hour. I don't see any problem with putting an hour on the clock. If the House wants to agree by unanimous consent to complete question period, it seems logical to me that there would be an amount of time left and they could agree to it very readily.

With respect to the time taken, your second point of order, to the member for Beaches-Woodbine, I think that's there in case there isn't a standing order directing me to do otherwise; in essence, if I'm in between standing orders or it's not clear, not written. It's very clear, without any doubt: "At 4 pm on any day on which the House has not commenced orders of the day, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings." It's just that simple: At 4 o'clock, I shall

interrupt, wherever we may be, and we shall move on. I don't think that's difficult at all. It's as clear as glass as far as I'm concerned, and I don't have the least bit of concern in making that ruling.

With respect to the member for St Catharines and the member for Beaches-Woodbine with respect to the votes, it says in standing order 30(b), "The Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and shall put every question necessary." There is no question to put in question period, other than the ones you want to put. Besides those, there's no question from the Chair to put. If we were in a voting process, I would stand and put the question. Then it would follow naturally that I'm disposing of it by having a five-, 15- or 30-minute bell.

I appreciate the points of order.

**Ms Lankin:** One for three.

**The Speaker:** One for three: right, basically.

**Mr Wildman:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: In light of your ruling and in light of the time taken today and the government's desire to remain accountable, I would ask for unanimous consent to complete question period.

**The Speaker:** Okay, I'll say it was 15 minutes. Is there unanimous consent to go 15 minutes to complete question period? No, there's not.

**Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The one issue you did not address was the issue that was raised by the member for Fort William dealing with the fact that you in effect took a 10- or 15-minute recess in order to arrive at a decision. Would you not agree that since it was not a matter that needed to be decided right there and then, at least the deliberation on that particular issue could have waited until after question period was held?

**The Speaker:** With the greatest respect, I probably would reserve if it didn't have to be made there and then. The difficulty at the time was that the decision I was taking needed to be made there and then. I had to recess to render a decision because the House couldn't continue until I did. That's why I did.

Finally, just to comment quickly with respect to causing some stress or undue hardship on the Speaker because of the time he's taking cutting question period, you're probably correct, but I'll have to live with that stress.

Petitions?

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Oh, right. We're not in petitions. Orders of the day.

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### TIME ALLOCATION

**Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Government House Leader):** I move that, pursuant to standing order number 46 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 148, An Act to deal with matters

relating to the establishment of the new City of Toronto, when Bill 148 is next called as a government order, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill without further debate or amendment, and at such time the bill shall be referred to the standing committee on general government;

That the standing committee on general government shall be authorized to meet for the purpose of conducting public hearings on the bill at its regularly scheduled meeting times on September 18 and September 25;

That all amendments shall be tabled with the clerk of the committee by 12 noon on October 1;

That the committee shall be authorized to meet to consider the bill for clause-by-clause consideration during its regularly scheduled meeting times on October 2; and that the committee shall be authorized to meet beyond its normal hour of adjournment on October 2 until completion of clause-by-clause consideration;

At 5:00 p.m. on October 2, those amendments which have not yet been moved shall be deemed to have been moved, and the Chair of the committee shall interrupt the proceedings and shall, without further debate or amendment, put every question necessary to dispose of all remaining sections of the bill and any amendments thereto. Any divisions required shall be deferred until all remaining questions have been put and taken in succession, with one 20-minute waiting period allowed pursuant to standing order 127(a);

That the committee shall report the bill to the House on October 6. In the event that the committee fails to report the bill on the date provided, the bill shall be deemed to be passed by the committee and shall be deemed to be reported to and received by the House;

That upon receiving the report of the standing committee on general government, the Speaker shall put the question for adoption of the report forthwith, and at such time the bill shall be ordered for third reading;

That one sessional day shall be allotted to the third reading stage of the bill. At 5:45 p.m. or 9:15 p.m. as the case may be on such day, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and shall put every question necessary to dispose of this stage of the bill without further debate or amendment;

That in the case of any division relating to any proceedings on the bill, the division bell shall be limited to 5 minutes.

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Mr Johnson moves that — dispense? Dispense.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Oh, we have a debate, sure.

**Hon David Johnson:** Mr Speaker, it's called accountability.

**Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma):** He would have preferred that approach.

**Hon David Johnson:** No, we wanted debating time. I guess we'll have to sort this out, because as the clock is now at 4:30, we may have to make some arrangement, which I'll endeavour to do after I'm finished speaking, so

that the third party can have some time. Otherwise they wouldn't have any time. We would want the third party to have some time.

**Mr Wildman:** We've just agreed to divide the time.

**Hon David Johnson:** We'll talk about that in a minute. But I am going to split my time with the member for Scarborough East and the member for York Mills.

I will say from the outset that this is an issue that has been a difficult one for me personally. This involves the creation of a new city of Toronto. Having had a history for over 20 years of involvement with the borough of East York, years I'm very proud of — a very fine community and a great experience. To be both alderman, as it was termed in those days, and more recently mayor of the borough of East York was indeed a privilege and an honour for me.

I do believe, looking at the future, that while there may be some trepidation about the new city of Toronto in the minds of quite a number of people, there's every reason to believe the one new city will be a success.

I know people are hard at work in terms of putting the structure together. The team of people are working hard to ensure there's an excellent structure which incorporates all the municipalities, all aspects, whether they have to do with some issues I was involved with over the weekend, including the Hydro services in the new city, or the public health services or sanitation or any number of services that are very important to people in Metropolitan Toronto.

I think it can work. I think it will involve less expense. As a result of having one clerk's department, for example, instead of seven clerks' departments, having one audit department instead of seven audit departments, one legal staff instead of seven legal staffs, one treasury instead of seven treasuries, and on and on and on, there's every reason to believe there will be the savings that KPMG has reported in the hundreds of millions of dollars, and that that money should come off the tax bills, a reduction in taxes, as a result of savings to the people of Metropolitan Toronto.

However, I think maybe just as important, the new city will have to preserve the fine communities and the community spirit that we have in Metropolitan Toronto —

**Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York):** I was worried.  
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**Hon David Johnson:** I understand your concern but, you know, there's a history of fine communities in Metropolitan Toronto. East York itself, the township of East York, goes back to 1924, and the town of Leaside back to 1913, and of course the city of Toronto back —

**Mr Marchese:** Way back.

**Hon David Johnson:** Way back. There is a long history of communities. The Todmorden community in East York was there even before the township. There was a community at Main and Danforth, Little Main I think it was called, back in the early part of this century. Those communities will continue to exist. I've said many times, even when I was at the municipal level, that the strength in a place like East York was in the communities and the people who were involved in the communities. That, my

good friends, will remain. That is what the new city has to foster and encourage, and I believe, with the community councils that have been set in place, that will be the case.

Our time is somewhat limited here today, but I just want to say that this bill, Bill 148, is a companion piece of legislation to Bill 103, which created the one city of Toronto. It's mostly a housekeeping kind of bill, with the main philosophy I guess and the main action being in Bill 103. But this is a bit of a housekeeping bill to deal with the agencies, the boards, the commissions, the very important agencies and boards such as the Toronto Transit Commission, the Metropolitan Toronto Zoo, Exhibition Place. It also involves ensuring —

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin):** The member for Fort York, if you want to hold a conversation, do it outside.

**Mr Marchese:** Was I too loud, Speaker?

**Hon David Johnson:** He is a bit loud, isn't he, Mr Speaker?

**Mr Marchese:** Who was that from?

**Hon David Johnson:** I don't know if they can pick him up. I can't say who's in the House or who isn't —

**Mr Marchese:** Say it.

**Hon David Johnson:** All right, the member for Fort York. There you are. I identified that the member for Fort York is here today. One of your colleagues would give me heck for identifying who is here and who isn't here. At any rate the member for Fort York is here and he's heckling me sometimes and he's supporting me other times. It's always a pleasure to be with the member for Fort York.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Okay, let's continue the debate.

**Hon David Johnson:** Many functions —

*Interjection.*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Let's go back to the debate.

**Hon David Johnson:** There's authority with regard to police, with regard to ambulance services in this bill, and many of the important services. It's a technical —

*Interjection.*

**The Deputy Speaker:** The member for Fort York, I don't have to tell you again, please.

**Hon David Johnson:** I think he got the message that time, Mr Speaker.

We have had three days of debate on this bill. On Bill 103 we had 15 days of hearings, we had 100 hours, we had over 600 people come to make depositions. There has been a great deal of debate and public input on this whole issue, yet it doesn't end and there will be more debate and there will be more committee work and there will be more clause-by-clause and more debate in this House on Bill 148, and I think it'll all be helpful.

Some people would have you believe that a time allocation motion is something dreamed up by this particular government.

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** No, just used frequently.

**Hon David Johnson:** My friend from St Catharines will tell you, "No, absolutely not," that the Liberal government, for example, when he was with that government even back in the 1980s used a time allocation process,

believe it or not, and the time allocation process had not even been formalized. That was formalized by the NDP government. I wonder how many times the NDP government used time allocation.

**Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East):** Tell us.

**Hon David Johnson:** Twenty-three times. Yet they bemoan the fact that the government has to use it to bring an issue, after a period of time, after you've had days and days of debate, after you've had 100 hours of public hearings on a related matter — yes, at some point in time you need to bring it to a head, and that's what we've done.

**Hon Marilyn Mushinski (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation):** The social contract notwithstanding.

**Hon David Johnson:** My friend is mentioning the social contract.

*Interjections.*

**Hon David Johnson:** There's a lot of chatter going on here, Mr Speaker. It's hard to —

**Mr Wildman:** Yes, you are not keeping the attention of the House.

**Hon David Johnson:** Well, I hope the House does pay attention to this, because this is one of the key issues we've dealt with this year. It's a matter I know is in good hands. I have every confidence that this is going to work. We have to bring this matter to a head so that the new government coming into office through the elections taking place this fall, the new government coming into office next year, will ensure that it has the mechanisms and the tools to give good government in Metropolitan Toronto.

**Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands):** Why didn't you think about this stuff before and you could have brought in one bill?

**Hon David Johnson:** The member opposite is heckling me and asking me certain questions.

We debated, for example, the gasoline bill. Last week we debated the gasoline bill and two parties, the government and the NDP, said, "Let's debate it for a certain period of time, but then let's bring it to a vote." The government said, "Let's bring it to a vote" —

*Interjection.*

**The Deputy Speaker:** The member for Kingston and The Islands.

**Hon David Johnson:** — and the NDP said, "Let's bring it to a vote," but the Liberal Party would not allow it to come to a vote. They said, "No, we have to debate and we have to debate and we have to debate." Every once in a while all parties acknowledge that there is a time to take action. The NDP acknowledged that last week on the gasoline pricing motion, we acknowledged that, but unfortunately the third party, the opposition, the Liberals, wouldn't allow that to come to a vote.

This is a time today to finish with the second reading debate. We've had three days on it. We will spend some more time this afternoon. We'll spend time in committee. We'll get it right. We'll have it back to the House for third reading and we'll lay the foundation for those members who are going to be elected by the municipal council this fall to come in.

**Mr Gerretsen:** You didn't get it right the first time. That is why you have the second bill. Why did you make the changes in the first place?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The member for Kingston and The Islands.

**Hon David Johnson:** My prediction is we'll have a cost-effective municipal government and we'll have a government that respects communities and allows sensitive input from those communities into the issues and into the services that are so important to our communities in Metropolitan Toronto.

**Mr David Turnbull (York Mills):** Mr Speaker, I would suggest that retroactively we agree to divide the debate this afternoon equally between the three parties. Perhaps you would seek unanimous consent that we divide the time equally between all three parties.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is there unanimous consent? I heard a no.

**Mr Turnbull:** Apparently the Liberals don't want to give equal time to all parties. So, okay.

We're debating time allocation on Bill 148 today. Time allocation means we are setting a time, that we have said there has been sufficient discussion in second reading and we want to move this out to committee. By moving this out to committee, we allow for public input. The opposition have indicated they would like some public input and we have indicated that we would allow time prior to the inter-session to do this, since this is a bill which only affects Metropolitan Toronto. So there is a time element as to why we have to move forward with this.

Second reading of this bill is a needed step before we can go to committees. We must end this. This bill deals with agencies, boards and commissions and it's really a technical bill. We have always suggested that there would be two bills dealing with one Toronto. This is of a technical nature to ensure that services are in place for all of the citizens of Toronto, starting January 1, 1998.

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The list of the things this bill does is quite extensive. It allows us to continue to operate the Toronto Transit Commission, Exhibition Place, the Metro zoo, the Hummingbird Centre, the Guild Inn, ambulance services, homes for the aged, to regulate street vending, to provide police protection and lifesaving services for Toronto Harbour, to operate conservation authority lands and exempt those lands from property taxes, to resolve disputes regarding bridges and highways, to operate a licensing commission, to operate the Toronto Islands ferries, to plan and act in emergencies, to enter into water supply and sewage treatment agreements with other municipalities, and to receive and dispose of liquid and solid waste and to establish and operate controlled-access roads within the new municipality. These are all essential.

It ensures that official plans are in place to guide land use in the new municipality of Toronto and to provide for pensions and benefits of municipal and local board employees and retirees.

Clearly, these are all functions which are done by the various municipalities at this moment. We have seven

municipalities. The first Toronto bill was highly debated and had very extensive hearings. In fact, the first bill, Bill 103, had over 100 hours of public hearings. We had over 600 individuals and groups that spoke to it and made presentations and we made changes and improvements to the bill based upon that.

We've had over 300 hours of legislative time spent on this piece of legislation. But this is technical in nature and it is time-sensitive because we must have it ready for the people of Metropolitan Toronto, which will become the city of Toronto on January 1.

Surely no member of this House could possibly argue about the need for the continuation of all the services I've just enumerated. The reason for all of these things is to ensure that the taxpayers get better value for money.

On page 17 of the Common Sense Revolution, the document which we took to the people prior to the last election, we stated: "We must rationalize the regional and municipal levels to avoid the overlap and duplication that now exists." This was a statement our party made a year before the last election. We fought an election on it and we won an election on that platform. The fact is, we are moving forward with that agenda.

I quite understand that the present members of the opposition don't agree with this, but as Winston Churchill once said, "The job of opposition is to oppose," and in that they are certainly doing their job.

But I would remind the members of the Liberal Party of the words of a former provincial Liberal leader. His name was John Wintermeyer. Wintermeyer said: "There is no other logical solution for Metropolitan Toronto other than total amalgamation. The metropolitan system of government is not the final solution. It is a step in between." I quote from a remark he made in the Toronto Telegram on August 4, 1962.

Of course, it's quite clear that the Liberal Party does not agree with saving the taxpayers money. That's why they doubled the expenditures of this province in the five short years they were the government. Let's just dwell on that for the moment: They doubled the expenditures of this province in five years.

Even the wretched NPD cannot match that record. They were profligate, agreed. But the Liberals doubled the expenditure of this province in five years, far exceeding the inflation rate. They will come back and say, "Oh, but there was high inflation at the time." But they far outstripped inflation by spending beyond the means of the taxpayers of this province, which had a direct result in the elimination of jobs in this province. We became less competitive and it cost the jobs of young people and old people alike in this province.

As we move forward with this legislation, we have one objective in mind, and that is to deliver services to the good citizens of Toronto in the best, most economical way. We're eliminating seven library boards. We've got six health boards, we've got two parking authorities and two historical boards. Why? Yes, it adds a few jobs for the people on those boards but it doesn't deliver efficient

services to the taxpayers, and that is what this legislation is all about.

We will continue to work hard to make sure we deliver on the promises we made in the last election: the elimination of duplication and the elimination of wastage. This legislation also allows the new council —

**Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon):** That's why the taxes are going up.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The member for Lake Nipigon.

**Mr Turnbull:** Pay attention, you might find something of interest here. It allows the citizens and the councillors of the old areas of Metropolitan Toronto to be able to look at reserves that their municipalities built up. It allows the councillors in the new council to be able to distribute them to the benefit of the taxpayers who paid those — not the whole of the new Toronto, but those people who have paid for it.

This legislation also allows for varying levels of service according to the areas, and it allows the councillors to be able to identify those services and whether the citizens want to continue them, and it allows for differing levels of taxation in order to be able to pay for them.

What could be more reasonable than allowing the citizens to say: "Yes, in our area of town we'd like to have a different level of service. For example, we would like to have the sidewalks plowed in winter and we will pay for it." That is perfectly reasonable and that is what this legislation does.

In cutting off further debate, after extensive debate, over 300 hours of debate, we want to move this into committee, which allows the public to have their input. That is why we're moving forward today.

I will not debate any longer simply because we want to ensure that the NDP gets an opportunity to debate. We will have to see whether the Liberals are prepared also to carry that thought in mind.

**Mr Gilchrist:** I'd like to add my comments to those of my colleagues from Don Mills and York Mills. There is no doubt the content of this bill follows very closely on the heels of Bill 103, the original City of Toronto Act.

You will recall that bill received literally 100 hours of committee hearings. We heard from over 600 groups. In addition to that, there were untold numbers who sent in their written comments, phoned and faxed.

I would remind the members opposite that back then many of those same people, those same groups, were commenting on the issues that are embodied in this bill here today. They were talking to us about TTC service, they were talking to us about the water and sewage, they were talking about the zoo and they were talking about all the other things the seven cities currently provide in the way of services to their citizens.

There is no doubt that under the umbrella of Bill 103, we have heard all of the various points of view. We have certainly heard from the members opposite that they believe the status quo is the only choice. They believe the duplication and the less than highest level of productivity that is received by having seven different agencies, seven

different governments effectively delivering the same services, should be maintained.

We've heard from a number of citizens who were concerned about the future of their communities. In large measure, the substantive concerns about governance and the substantive concerns about how the future shape of those communities will evolve were addressed in the amendments that were brought forward in Bill 103.

Now before us are the purely technical issues that relate back to those governmental changes. What this bill is all about is quite simple: It is the technical changes that need to be brought about to ensure that all the services currently provided by the seven cities continue after January 1, 1998. This bill will ensure that the TTC continues to operate, that the zoo operates, the Guild Inn, that all the services we take for granted in this great city continue to be provided at exactly the same level and at exactly the same cost on day one.

1650

In the bigger picture, of course, there is the opportunity now for the new city council to find economies of scale, to find ways of consolidating their administrative aspects of these various services to ensure that savings are found there that can then be applied either back as tax savings to the overtaxed citizens of this city or to improve those services. Ironically, those who would vote for the status quo and would oppose the changes we're bringing forward here are those who would suggest that we don't find those savings, we don't find those economies of scale. But I would remind the members opposite this bill does something else — and they themselves were very vocal about this issue back when Bill 103 was debated — and that is on the issue of reserves.

First off, it should be said that there really only are two cities that have net reserves. Many of them took the time to talk about how many dollars they had in the bank but they conveniently left out of the equation that they actually have liabilities that exceed those dollar reserves in all but two cases. But we think it's appropriate — and this bill makes it very clear — that the reserves, if there are any, will continue to accrue to the benefit of those citizens living in the geographic portion of the new city of Toronto in which they were created. That's fair. We made you that commitment back in Bill 103; this bill now carries forward on that promise.

It also ensures that other important issues such as the pensions of all of the citizens who are employed by the seven cities right now continue to flow seamlessly and without any concern to those already retired or those still employed who are looking forward to their retirement years. It ensures that their pension plans continue unchanged and unfettered.

The bottom line is that this bill is just a technical addition to the very substantial government changes that were proposed and carried out in Bill 103. We have to look at it in the context of what is actually happening out on the hustings right now in this great city. We have at least one mayoral candidate who has looked at this bill, has looked at Bill 103, has looked at all the other issues that arise

from this chamber, and he's made it very clear he believes — in fact, he has used the word "guarantee" — that if he's elected there will be no property tax increase.

The bottom line is that if a majority of the other councillors who are elected this fall share that point of view, then clearly all of the goals we set out in Bill 103 and in this bill will come to pass: tax savings, maintained or improved services, more efficient and effective delivery of government services and a greater ability for the city of Toronto to respond in the years to come and to ensure that it takes its rightful place leading all the other communities of this world, all the other great cities in terms of attracting new jobs investment.

With that, I'll remind you that the Liberal Party opposed the sharing of time equally. While we've only taken 27 minutes to comment on behalf of the two-thirds of the members in this House who were elected by the people of this province and who sit on the government benches, we'll now leave time available for the opposition. I hope the Liberal Party shows some compassion to their colleagues and similarly cuts their time to ensure that the third party has a chance to comment on the time allocation motion.

**Mr Bradley:** The first word that comes into mind is "phoney" because that's the most phoney statement I've heard in a long time in this House. Since when has a member of the Harris government ever been concerned about the time that an opposition party is going to get? You never have been, so don't be phoney about it. I'm going to tell you that there's always going to be appropriate time for all parties. That's always the way it has worked in this House. To make that kind of statement is just totally ridiculous. I think the members of this House know it; I hope the public knows as well that this is a government that's trying to give a lecture on the allocation of time for debate when the purpose of this motion this afternoon is to close off debate.

I listened to the government House leader start today by saying: "Aren't these rules great? They give more members a chance to speak." If the purpose of the rules — and I know that's not the purpose of the rules — was, as the government likes to suggest, to give more members a chance to speak, then the government would not be bringing in time allocation motion after time allocation motion. Almost every day we have a motion tabled in this House to limit debate, to cut down on the debate of any particular issue before this House.

Again, the word "phoney" comes to mind when the government suggests it's to give members more chance. There isn't anybody in this House who truly believes that, even on the government side. I'm sure the public and the news media won't be fooled by that contention, because the government is again bringing in a time allocation motion. The government likes to make references to previous circumstances.

The government now has the tightest set of rules, the most restrictive set of rules this Legislature has ever had. It allows the government to grease the skids for all of its legislation, controversial as it might be, reckless as it

might be, drastic as it might be, to get through the House in record time. Yet even with these new rules, the government is still bringing in motion after motion to limit debate further.

We can see that the government does not have much interest in the democratic process. Ultimately, let me remind members of the House that even the government does a better job when it takes time to do things right rather than simply to do them quickly. We have to know, however, what the motivation of the government is.

The motivation is to get this controversial legislation, these drastic changes through as quickly as possible, for a couple of reasons. One is that in its last year in office there'll be very little legislative time. The government will be doing next to nothing except handing out money left and right in the last year. That's exactly what is going to happen. The government has no intention of sitting in the last days.

**Hon Noble Villeneuve (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs):** That was the Liberals.

**Hon Ms Mushinski:** That's not true.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mr Bradley:** You can see that I have managed to raise the anger of some of the members of the Legislature, particularly the hard-core right wing over there —

*Interjection.*

**The Deputy Speaker:** The member for Scarborough East, you had your turn.

**Mr Bradley:** — the members of the Reform Party federally who must have invited Preston Manning to attend the YPC convention to give a speech. I'm pleased for my good friends — I have many good friends in the Conservative Party across the province who are very perturbed by the fact, as I'm sure Mr Danford is, my good friend Harry, that the YPCs, the Young Progressive Conservatives, invited Preston Manning to speak to their convention.

**Mr Gilchrist:** No, they didn't.

**Mr Bradley:** Immediately after the convention, but very close to it.

I know this is a touchy subject with the members of the government because it's a slap in the face to the federal leader, Jean Charest, who worked so hard on behalf of the Conservative Party in the last federal election. Many of my good friends in St Catharines who are members of the Conservative Party are absolutely shocked when they hear that Preston Manning is invited to address the group that was gathered together for the YPC convention. That always perturbs the government. That's what happens: We can't discuss these matters as extensively as we might under the new rules.

**Mr Douglas B. Ford (Etobicoke-Humber):** Right on.

**Mr Bradley:** I know that the member from Humber agrees with me when I say that; he always agrees with me. He wants me to mention Brian Mulroney again. He always wants me to mention Brian Mulroney — and I have that commitment to do so on behalf of my friend Noble

Villeneuve to mention Brian Mulroney — because of course he was the leader around whom all Conservatives rallied in years gone by.

But let's look at the implications of the legislation we're seeing. First of all, the legislation which is the subject of this closure motion, of this time allocation motion, is legislation which was rejected by 76% of the people in Metropolitan Toronto in the plebiscite which was held in Toronto — 76%. What happens is that the members of the government, if they don't like the outcome, object to the process. If the process had produced a 76% vote in favour, they would have been applauding the process and saying, "Why is the opposition complaining?"

But I've listened to these members — true Reformers many of them — who say, "We have to rule by referendum; we have to consult the people." The municipalities consulted the people and a fine debate took place. There was a debate in this Legislature, there were debates across Metropolitan Toronto in each of the municipalities and when the results came in on election night, overwhelmingly 76% of the people within the boundaries of Metropolitan Toronto said they didn't want this legislation, they didn't want a megacity. They saw many of the examples south of the border.

**1700**

I know many of my friends on the government side idolize the Republican zealots, those in the Republican party who are the adherents to people such as House Speaker Newt Gingrich and some of the real right-wingers — the governor of New Jersey, for instance. They idolize what these people do and they obviously like what's happened to large American cities.

One of the things most Americans tell us when come to Canada is: "One thing we like about your cities is they're liveable. You don't have the megacity governments that we have in the United States. You have individual communities, you have individual municipalities and you allow for that kind of local input." That's what they tell me.

*Interjections.*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mr Bradley:** I know it annoys members of the government to hear this, but you talk to Americans who come here. They like us the way we have developed over the years.

**Hon Mr Villeneuve:** They come for the casinos and you know it.

**Mr Bradley:** Mr Villeneuve, the member for Stormont, Dundas, Glengarry and — ?

**Hon Mr Villeneuve:** East Grenville.

**Mr Bradley:** — East Grenville, he always adds that; it's very important — mentions "for casinos." Across this province, this government is bound and determined that it's going to put video lottery terminals or electronic slot machines in every bar and every restaurant on every street, in every neighbourhood, in every village and town and city in the province of Ontario.

Let me explain, because members over there justifiably will say, "How does this relate to that legislation?" I know

they're going to ask that. Let me tell you how it does. It relates in the following way: If we were to actually consult the people at the local level and say, "Do you want these so-called charity casinos in your community?" then individually, as communities in Metropolitan Toronto, some could say, "No, we don't want them." But if it's simply Metro as a whole, then Metro could make a decision which is going to allow these charity casinos into Scarborough or into Etobicoke or into the Beaches area, where there's some opposition to it. But if we had those individual municipalities, then the individual municipalities in Metropolitan Toronto would be able to say, "No, we don't want them."

I know the members who are sitting in this House who ran on the family values issue. They were good family values people and they wouldn't allow casinos and video lottery terminals and other forms of gambling in this province. But today they are part of a government which is imposing them everywhere in Ontario. When you make bigger municipalities, they don't have the same opportunity to reject them.

I know the people of Kitchener, for instance, their council said, "We don't want these charity casinos with all these video lottery terminals," and I agree with them. Here we are, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year perhaps, these casinos will be operating in this province.

The good family values people who go to church on Sunday and walk out proudly and tell everybody they're good family values people are part of a government imposing those in Ontario. I'm surprised that they have not prevailed, because I know if this legislation were not passed, if we did not have one megacity, there may be people within those individual municipalities who would reject them, people who genuinely have those family values, who genuinely would run locally on those family values. They would say, "We do not want these operations in our community," and I would agree with those people. I would agree with their right to say that. We're not going to see that now.

I say to my friend from Humber, unfortunately, with the megacity, if the megacity council decides it's going to have them, then even a fine community like the old Humber part of Etobicoke will be stuck with these casinos, even if it doesn't want them, and that's most unfortunate. I can't believe the family values crowd that was elected would allow this to happen. But I don't want to dwell on that forever, because I know the government has to apologize for this.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Bradley:** The minister from Scarborough who interjects had a disastrous press conference. The news media were falling over themselves laughing at the end of the press conference because she couldn't answer questions about it. Now she interjects to me about them. You couldn't answer the questions, so don't interject about that when you can't answer the questions. They know now that they're going to have them 24 hours a day, seven days a

week, with all these new video lottery terminals in those particular casinos.

Let's look at the philosophy which I have seen evolve over the years. One thing you always said about the Conservative Party in this province was that they were for strong local government. They said bigger wasn't better. I think of Mr Danford and the part of the province he comes from. He would know many of the mayors and the reeves and the deputy reeves and so on. They believed, as did the Bill Davis government, as did the John Robarts government, as did the Leslie Frost government, that local government was good. It was closest to the people; it was the most accountable to the people. They didn't believe in these huge megalopolises that are being contemplated by this government.

The new philosophy of this government quite obviously —

*Interjections.*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order, order. Member for St Catharines.

**Mr Bradley:** The new philosophy of the Reform Party — the Harris government — is quite obviously different. They don't want to have these individual communities, they want to have huge communities and huge health units in the province — it doesn't matter how big they are — huge school boards that are larger in many cases than many European countries. They assume that bigger is automatically better.

That's not the Conservatives I remember; that's not the people who governed the people of this province in a moderate fashion, in a reasonable fashion, who didn't move ahead recklessly, who didn't destroy what had been built up over the years by many good people in the communities. But this zealous group of Conservatives we have now —

**Hon Ms Mushinski:** Tax, tax, tax, 60 tax increases.

**The Deputy Speaker:** You will all have a chance to speak. The floor belongs to the member for St Catharines.

*Interjections.*

**The Deputy Speaker:** No, order. The floor belongs to the member for St Catharines. I don't want to hear any interjections.

**Mr Bradley:** Thank you, Mr Speaker.

This zealous group of people don't believe in this. They want to make everything big. "Bigger is better," they say, unlike the Conservatives of the past.

**Mr Wildman:** That's right.

**Mr Bradley:** My friend Mr Wildman, the member for Algoma, has sat in this House since 1975. He will recall that while we had some differences with the Conservatives of the day, we recognized that most of those people who were in the government caucus of the day, the Conservative caucus, were people who believed in the local community. They didn't want to see a megalopolis. They recognized that the smaller the unit, the more accountable it is.

They probably today have read the paper put out by Dr Joseph Kushner and his colleagues at Brock University — Dr Kushner being a man of very conservative background

— which in fact has pointed out that there are no savings when you make things bigger. They did a detailed study.

Dr Kushner sat on St Catharines city council for 21 years. He has been the consistent voice of restraint. He has been very cautious with the taxpayers' dollars, what you people say you are, and he has recognized through the study that he has done with other economists at the university that bigger doesn't produce better.

There has been only one study done on Metropolitan Toronto and of course that one study detailed, "Are there going to be savings or not?" That one study said there wouldn't be any savings. What you're prepared to do is to have a huge megalopolis and all the problems you have with that by losing accountability, by losing that local touch, by losing that local input. You're going to sacrifice all that and not save the money that you contend you're going to save. I don't know who sold this to the Conservative caucus, because the true Conservatives would never believe this is the case. True Conservatives recognize that the local authority, is closest to the people and that many of those decisions could be made best at the local level.

1710

The last referendum that was held in Metropolitan Toronto I guess you could say was the by-election. I never read too much into by-election results, but I look and say, if the government was very popular, if what the government was doing, for instance, on the megacity was popular with the people in Oriole and North York, then surely the Conservatives would have won that election, because that was yet another chance for people to express themselves on some of the issues of the day. If they felt overwhelmingly that what the government was doing was sensible, was going to work, was good for the municipality, they probably would have gone to the Conservative Party in droves and voted for those people, and they didn't, just as 76% of the people in the plebiscites held across the city voted against one huge megacity.

Some of those people too are just finding out today, as a result of the report that came into the House, that this government is ending rent control. I know that the large landlords are going to be absolutely delighted with this. If you own huge complexes in downtown Toronto and you're going to be able to now gouge people for whatever you want to gouge them for — when the person moves out, you just put the rents up as high as you want — then you recognize that rent control is leaving. I wonder how many seniors in Wentworth East would recognize that we now are ending rent controls in this province.

One of the areas where there was action taken initially to bring to the attention of the government the huge rent increases that were taking place in these large complexes was in the city of Toronto, not necessarily Metropolitan Toronto, but in the city of Toronto. That prompted Premier Davis, the Premier of the day, to announce in the middle of an election campaign in 1975 that there would be rent controls implemented in this province. Premier Davis obviously thought they were a good idea. He saw that there were people who were being gouged. He saw that the rents were getting totally out of control: nothing re-

lated to the cost of operating, nothing related to reasonable profit; they were just out of control. So Premier Davis, a Progressive Conservative Premier, with people such as W. Darcy McKeough, a very Conservative Treasurer in his day, brought in rent control in this province, and now this government is ending rent controls. I'm wondering how many seniors watching this Legislature this afternoon know this government is ending rent controls in this province and that they're going to be placed in a very vulnerable position.

**Mr Ford:** They will know now.

**Mr Bradley:** As my friend from Humber says, they will know now.

We're on a time allocation motion. With the new rules that exist in this House, I am at a loss to figure out why the government continues to bring in closure motions closing off the debate. I thought with the new rules limiting and restricting debate so much that the government should be able to tolerate a full and frank debate, a full discussion on the legislation that comes before it. This time allocation motion is going to stop that from happening, and that is most unfortunate. That exposes for the people of this province that the real agenda of the government was to ram its legislation through in record time, not to provide more chance for debate.

We would be delighted if the government were simply extending the hours of debate for the purpose of more debate, for the purpose of more members, but what the government does now is that the afternoon session is counted as one day of debate and the evening session is counted as another day of debate. In our democracy, it has been generally accepted that the government pays the price, if you will, of a question period for each day of debate that is recorded for the purposes of a bill. The government is getting two for one in this case, and that of course does not bode well for accountability or the democratic process.

Today we saw as part of the rules that we're talking about this afternoon that question period was in fact limited to 45 minutes, not an hour. It could happen on certain days that there would be no question period at all, because if the opposition — or the government, for that matter — is to raise any legitimate matters previous to question period and question period has now been relegated to seventh place from third place, then we wouldn't have a question period.

Yes, that affects the opposition the most, but it also affects non-cabinet members of the government who may wish to address their scintillating questions to the government, their penetrating questions that are directed to ministers on a daily basis, exposing some of the weaknesses of the government and of course raising issues of great importance to those individuals and their communities. I know there wouldn't be any government members who would simply get up and read a question that the minister had given to that person and be used in that way. I can't believe there would be any government member who would do that. I remember my friend Derwyn Shea, the member for High-Park Swansea, saying he would never

do that. I'm trying to remember if has ever done that, but I know he wouldn't want to do that. So it even deprives members of the government who are not in the cabinet of their opportunity to participate in question period.

I would have thought this afternoon, with the great importance of the problem that my friend from Lambton and I have chatted about and that my friend from Quinte and I have chatted about on many occasions, gas prices, we would want to have more people on record expressing their views about gas prices, because that's a very important issue. But we try to get the government to call that as a matter of debate in this House and they refuse to do so.

They have one afternoon. They want to ram something through in one afternoon. We believe that members, even government members, should have their chance to express their views, to talk about how within the jurisdiction of this government lie many of the solutions to those high gas prices, right within Mike Harris's jurisdiction: not having to point the finger at the municipalities, not having to point the finger at the federal government, but right within their own jurisdiction. I wanted to have an opportunity for the government members to get up and express that view, and I would have hoped the government whip would not have limited the opportunity for some of the more vociferous and expert members in this field to speak in this House on that matter.

I want to say as well that this bill is, as you say, a technical bill, but it flows out of the more substantial bill which flew in the face of the democratic views expressed by the people of Metropolitan Toronto. So when my friend from Algoma and I, as House leaders in the opposition, have to deal day after day with a time allocation motion, with a debate-limiting motion, we begin to see the erosion of the democratic process.

I recognize the difference, and I've said this on other occasions in the House: There's a difference between a business and the democratic process in this House. This is not to say that within ministries one cannot apply business practices, and that's important to note. There are some things that can be applied to government, and we welcome when that kind of input is forthcoming. But this House isn't your small business. This House isn't where you snap your fingers and say it is automatically the law. That that's the way it is.

I do not say that your business has to be run as a democracy. I don't say that. I never contend that, because that is a different milieu; that is a different circumstance. But in this House, the democratic process should be pre-eminent, and I want to ensure that it's going to be pre-eminent. That's why when we get a motion of this kind, my colleagues and I from time to time will rise in the House to express our concern about it.

1720

I only implore the members of the government caucus to suggest to the government House leader, who takes his orders from the Premier, so to the Premier — if you want to stand up to the Premier, there is a penalty to be paid, I suppose, but if you stand up in the caucus meeting and say to the Premier and the cabinet members who are there:

"We believe we should slow down and do things right instead of simply doing them quickly. We believe there should genuinely be more time for debate in the House, more hearings available so we can get the kind of input that's necessary to bring forward legislation which is much better than that which we have seen come forward."

The angry right-wingers who are impatient with the process of democracy must understand how important that democracy is, because there may be a circumstance when some of those arch right-wingers are sitting in opposition and they should legitimately have their point of view put forward and they should be able to call the government to account. It doesn't always work on one side.

This afternoon my colleagues and I in this House have expressed some views which we think are important. We hope the people of this province agree with us. Certainly one of the messages, of many, that was delivered last Thursday was that many people are not happy about the way the government is proceeding because we saw a substantial drop in the percentage of the vote for the Conservative Party. That's got to be worrisome to some Conservative members of the House who agree with the people who expressed that.

What is ironic surely, Mr Speaker, to you and to me, is that at the very time that many members of the government who are not part of the cabinet are calling upon the government to slow down and do things right instead of simply quickly, when they're doing that, this government is doing exactly the opposite. There are some members, the zealous right-wingers, the real revolutionaries, who want to ram things through, and I understand that, but I think within the caucus there are probably some thoughtful small-c conservatives, the very thoughtful people who say: "Let's get it right. Let's not simply ram things through the House."

What this motion this afternoon is all about, this time allocation, this closure motion, is limiting debate and limiting democracy in our province.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson):** The Chair recognizes the member for —

**Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt):** Dovercourt.

**The Acting Speaker:** The member for Dovercourt. How could I forget?

**Mr Silipo:** How could you forget, Speaker, after all the exchanges you and I had during the predecessor to this bill?

**Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton):** Well, he has been on holidays for a couple of weeks.

**Mr Silipo:** We've all been on holidays for a couple of weeks. That's fine. It's understandable.

**Interjection:** Was he in France?

**Mr Silipo:** No, I'm the one who was in France. I don't know where he was.

**Interjection.**

**Mr Silipo:** I'd be happy to tell you about my time in France but the time today doesn't allow for that. We'll save that for another time. I did tell the government members opposite of one interesting observation I made when I was in France earlier this summer. People know there is a

socialist government there, elected overwhelmingly this past spring. In fact it was interesting that the first action that government took upon coming back from the summer recess was to announce its new job creation incentive for youth.

Again, I'll have the particular numbers on another occasion, but in a situation in which the youth unemployment there is lower than it is here in Canada and in Ontario, we have a situation in which the government there chooses to invest a significant amount of money to create 350,000 new jobs aimed at young people under 26. Here we have a government that believes the way to create jobs is through this trickle-down effect, which no doubt will have some positive effect but, by and large, will not work.

What we have now in front of us is a time allocation motion on Bill 148. I want to just spend a couple of minutes on this, because I know my colleague from Fort York will want to speak on this. Speaker, I should notify you, as I'm required under the rules, that I'll be sharing this time with my colleague from Fort York.

I just want to say that I need to put on the record, not just because it's part of my duty as the critic for our caucus on this very important issue but because I truly believe it, that I find it troubling and offensive that this government is resorting to a time allocation motion on Bill 148, which is the second of the bills relating to the amalgamation, the creation of a megacity here in Metropolitan Toronto. I say troubling because I'm not sure that it was really necessary to do this on the part of the government, yet not surprising because this is typical of how this government has chosen to behave on this issue of amalgamation within Metropolitan Toronto.

Who could forget the experience we went through on the predecessor bill, where we had to go to extraordinary measures to ensure that at the end of the day the voice of the people was heard. The government chose to ignore the voice of the people. The government chose to ignore the hundreds of people who came in front of the committee on Bill 103 and said no to the megacity. They chose to ignore 76% of the people who voted in the referendum across Metropolitan Toronto who overwhelmingly said no to the megacity.

The government chose to try to paint those voices as being opposed to change when in fact people were overwhelmingly saying, "Yes, we do support the need for change, yes, we're prepared to embark upon a process of change, but we want change that still maintains a sense of local communities and a sense of local structures in the lower councils, the city councils that are obviously large enough to function in a metropolis like Metropolitan Toronto yet small enough that we don't lose that connection that now exists between the elected officials and the people they represent."

That is, in my view, the biggest problem you have with the creation of one megacity: You create a council that is responsible for 2.3 million people, with 56 councillors. Whatever you may call it, you cannot call it a local council. It just can never function in that way, in the way that all of us who have had anything to do with local councils,

whether on municipal councils or on school boards, as I had the privilege of doing for some years on the Toronto Board of Education, another board that is also losing itself in this new mega-board that is being created — you cannot maintain that sense of relationship that has to be there between the electors and the people they elect to represent them on the new council, and particularly even the relationship between councillors, when you have or will have in this new megacity council a council that is going to be larger than the next Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

**Mr Pouliot:** It's a mini-Parliament.

**Mr Silipo:** It's a mini-Parliament, as my colleague from Lake Nipigon reminds us. It is going to create a situation in which that which we know to be best about local government will not be able to function as well. I am not going to stand here and say that some aspects of it won't work. Obviously some parts of it can. People, I think, are going to try as hard as they can to make it work, given what they've been given, but is it the best choice that could have been made? No, far from it.

We set out throughout the whole process, and on this not only did we object very strongly to what the government was doing — we did and we still do oppose what the government has done in creating the megacity — but also, I want to remind members opposite particularly, we were very clear throughout the process in saying, first of all, that we, as the New Democratic Party, supported the need for change and, second, we went beyond that simple line and that position and said, "Here's how we would go about bringing about this change."

We actually put forward what we thought and still think was a practical way to go about making that change, which was to follow the advice that the last two major studies on the whole issue of Metropolitan Toronto and the surrounding areas have told us. Both the Anne Golden study and the work that David Crombie did said that the first and most significant problem to be dealt with was not the issue of Metropolitan Toronto itself but was in fact the economic entity we know as the greater Toronto area, that the first line of attention should be put on to the GTA. We said that we believed, and we believe today, the first line of action the government should have taken was to set in place a process to work towards a greater Toronto council. I understand the difficulties politically. I understand the difficulties it would have caused for any of us, any of the three parties, had we been in government. Now it's obviously up to the Tory government to carry the can on this, as on other issues, because they're the government.

1730

The concept of having one municipal body, one overall regional government that's the size of the GTA, even with reduced boundaries within that, I can see from a provincial perspective might cause some hesitation. Yet it's what needs to be done, because that's where you need the coordination. That's where you need the coordination in terms of services, whether it's transportation, whether it's overall planning, whether it's waste disposal, any of the other big, important services.

That's where the government should have moved first, and then within that, set in place, as we had suggested, a process which would have involved, and we would have supported, the delay of the municipal elections by a year in order to show the seriousness of the government to move on this and yet slow enough to allow for some real discussion — a time period within which you would have allowed some real discussion about then what other changes should be made to the local municipalities, not just within Metropolitan Toronto but within this whole greater Toronto area.

I am quite sure, as a result of that, had we had embarked upon that process, we would have come up with changes to the present structures. We would have come up with fewer municipalities at the local level than we have now. But we would not have come up with, I believe very strongly, one municipality for the whole of Metropolitan Toronto. That is something that, by and large, most people do not support.

It would have been far more sensible for the government to follow that process. You would have been able to listen to people and you would have been able to be the government that finally acted on this very important file and you would have been able to say that you acted in a way that was responsive and responsible. Instead, what we have is a government that at best can say, "We made a decision." I'm sorry, this kind of get-tough approach of saying: "We made a decision. You guys never made any decisions. We made a decision on this, therefore we showed the toughness of our convictions and we came to a decision," may be good at first blush.

That may impress a few people at first blush, but at the end of the day making a bad decision is not particularly good, in my mind at least. Making a bad decision, particularly in an area like this, is going to have its impact felt not just for next year or the year after but for a few years down the line, subject to whatever changes may be made down the line.

We've put on the record that if we form the next government we will re-evaluate this issue. We will look again at the kinds of changes that would need to be made to bring down this enormous structure that is being created. We don't think that one megacity for Metropolitan Toronto is going to work, so changes are going to have to be done.

**Hon Ms Mushinski:** Why didn't you do it?

**Mr Silipo:** Members opposite say, "Why didn't you do it when you were in government?" I wish we could have acted on every single issue when we were in government, but at least we had started the process. We were the ones who started the Anne Golden process. We were the ones who put in place that process and we were determined — we knew that we had to act once the report came in. We knew there would be some difficult choices that would have to be made when that report came in. I thought I admitted earlier that the concept of one regional government was something I foresaw would have given us some trouble but something we would have had to come to grips with as a government. But I believe we would have done

that, as opposed to what this government is doing, which is to simply go what I thought initially was the cheap politics route, if you will, and say, "We're going to put one massive council in Metropolitan Toronto."

If you recall, at the beginning the big line that was being carried by Mike Harris and Al Leach and everyone else associated with this was, "Look at how many politicians we're getting rid of." That was the line. Of course they then, as part of their backing off or their way of trying to appease people, had to double the number of politicians they were looking at from their original proposal in terms of the mega-council.

But the bottom line, as I see it, remains that the basic decision that was made was fundamentally wrong and was done the opposite to the way it should have been done. It should have started with the regional level. Whenever the government comes down with some legislation on that, I think you will find that we will be very supportive of anything that moves the integration and the coordination of services in that area. Mark my words: I certainly will continue to be supportive of that direction. I believe that's essential for the growth of this region regardless of my very strong feelings, despite my very strong feelings that the megacity within that is still wrong.

You're hearing that very clearly from people not just inside Metropolitan Toronto but also from political leaders and citizens in the 905 area. Why? Because they are very concerned as they see the move towards the coordinating body that we expect will come at some point. They see that they're going to have some problems as well, as members of that 905 area, relating to the other partner in this coordinating function, this coordinating body, whatever it turns out to be, having in effect half the size of the rest of the 905 area put together.

The balance is just wrong for those reasons as well, but it is particularly wrong when you look inside Metropolitan Toronto and expect a local municipality to function with the kind of size and shape we have in front of us in the megacity. Bill 148, which is in front of us today, carries on the next stage in the implementation of that process and puts together a number of bodies which now function at the Metro Toronto level and therefore are sensible in terms of maintaining their relationship directly as one body reporting to the new council. But it also amalgamates, in the style of the various actions the government has already taken, a number of other boards. Here again I believe the government is moving too hastily in making some of these decisions.

Despite the fact that I'm opposed to the way in which the government is proceeding on this, I'm looking forward, through the committee hearings on Bill 148, to hearing what is happening in a couple areas, particularly the work the transition team has been doing. I hope we will have cooperation on behalf of the government to have the head and the members of the transition team come in front of the committee, tell us what they have been doing in some particular areas of preparation they have been working on and tell us where they may be hearing from people some

different models of implementing the new megacity, even among some of the local boards.

I'll be interested particularly to listen, and I say this knowing that the Minister of Citizenship is here — I continue to raise this with her and with the House and hope she is still planning to bring us some changes with respect to library boards.

We have continued to hear from people about the issue of the Metro reference library board, the fact that there is consensus. I have yet to hear anybody, even on the government side, other than obviously through the votes, make a really strong case for saying that board should also be amalgamated with the other boards. It is a recognition of the unique nature of that library and therefore of the need for the governing structure to continue to be separate and distinct from the rest of the library boards. That is something I hope the government will, through an amendment to this bill, be prepared to rectify.

Likewise, I'll be interested in hearing from the transition team. I'd just say on that, when we dealt with Bill 109, the libraries bill, on that issue the committee unanimously agreed to refer that issue, a motion I had put at that time, to the transition team with a view to having them look at that issue and report back to the Legislature at some point. This is the time they need to report back to us.

Similarly, there are other bodies where it would be interesting to hear what work has been going on with the transition team and what the government is prepared to do to deal, for example, with the reality of the new community councils. Can they not, should they not play a larger role in some of these areas than simply going to one large board, whether it's for libraries or for any of the other services?

Those are the things we need to look at. They may be technical in nature, as some members of the government would have us believe, but they are indeed the nuts and bolts that will make the new city function or add to the sense of frustration people have had so far with this government. Here, I would say again to the government, is probably your last opportunity on this very important issue to show some flexibility as you put together the implementation of this, but particularly as that is reflected in this bill, Bill 148, because this will be the last legislative opportunity within the life of this government, I venture to say, for any of these issues to be addressed properly in so far as they require legislation.

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I look forward to the committee process on this with obviously mixed emotions and mixed feelings, in the sense that I oppose what the government is doing and yet want to make sure that we do everything possible to ensure that where some changes can be made to the legislation that will make the workings of the new council and the new city work better, that is done and the government is prepared to listen to that.

I hope that will happen on the library issue and on other files, and we will see whether, in the short time we will have in the standing committee, the government is

prepared at all to make some of those very important concessions.

Thank you for your time.

**Mr Marchese:** I'm pleased to have an opportunity to add some thoughts to what the member for Dovercourt has already presented to this House. He spoke about process and spoke about what we had recommended as a caucus in the NDP. We suggested that would have been the way to go, but this government clearly doesn't like the kind of process that we suggested and recommended. In fact, it reflects very clearly the *modus operandi* of this government. As we have spoken about in the past and we continue to speak about, the *modus operandi* of this government reflects haste, reflects arrogance, reflects autocracy and a dictatorial approach to this place. That is the *modus operandi* of this government.

I suggest to you that this haste of yours is endangering many of the structures we have set in place in the past and endangering many of our social structures that we have put in place in the past. I suggest again to this government that the tumbling of Tory support in this province reflects their haste, their arrogance, their autocracy and their dictatorial approach to all the policy issues they present in this place. We see it day in and day out. We see it in the responses of every minister in this House, daily. They never answer questions. Speaker, you know that because you listen attentively in the back. You listen to these ministers, as I do. I tell you, I never hear answers.

I've listened to the Minister of Education day in and day out for the last two years and some odd months in this place, and all he tells us is that he's concerned about quality and that in order to achieve quality in education he's got to continue to cut to make it better. That's the only answer this poor fellow has to every question directed to him.

The Minister of Labour, even though she whacks injured workers and whacks every worker in this province, continues in her way always to say, "We care about them."

We've had a ruling on the issue of pay equity and you heard her answer today: She hasn't had an opportunity to read it, but she cares and they spend a lot of money in relation to the issues of pay equity.

Everything they do belies what we see, yet in the language they speak, you have the Minister of Labour saying, "We care," the Minister of Education saying, "We care; we're cutting to make it better." Day in and day out, that's all you get from these ministers: arrogance, haste, autocracy and a dictatorial approach to the issues of the day. That's the *modus operandi*.

We see it reflected again today in this closure motion. We're dealing with a closure motion on Bill 148, the son of megacity, the companion piece to Bill 103, the multi-headed monster. The mythical hydra is before us today. We've dealt with one monster, Bill 103, and they introduced a companion piece. Thus we have our mythical character hydra presented here today.

How many monsters can we deal with at a time? How many more companion pieces can they bring that we

opposition parties, as small as we are, with fewer energies, can deal with? How many monsters can we deal with at a time? I tell you, this government continues to present them with incredible haste, day in and day out.

I know this government has many lawyers in the back benches who are quite eager and good soldiers. I know that they think they're capable of handling all this.

**Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold):** They're practising law.

**Mr Marchese:** They're practising law?

**Mr Kormos:** Of course they are.

**Mr Marchese:** Imagine, some of these people are here and they have other jobs on the side. I don't know, but I see this as another monster that I have to deal with.

We listened to the member for York Mills and he says, like the Minister of Education —

**Interjection:** Why?

**Mr Marchese:** We listen because he's here; he speaks so we've got to listen to him. He says, "We are giving better value for our money." What evidence does he present for that, other than the fact that the member for York Mills, who is omnipotent, omniscient, seems to have a handle —

**Interjection.**

**Mr Marchese:** There are many omnis. I guess we have to trust his omnipotent knowledge, but I tell you, he presents no knowledge other than his omnipotence. That, to me, is evidence of nothing.

M. Beaubien est arrivé. Bonjour, Monsieur Beaubien. C'est bien de vous voir ici aujourd'hui. C'est important d'être ici à m'écouter parce que c'est une discussion très importante. Merci, Monsieur Beaubien.

The member for York Mills says we're going to save money. How? He doesn't ever explain. They never explain. All the ministers, all these poor unhappy backbenchers come here every day singing the same tune. They probably know the tune, but they can't dance.

We say to the member for York Mills, bring your studies. Where are they? We have seen studies to the contrary, showing that bigger is not better, showing that when you make it bigger it will cost more, yet this government in its arrogant way says: "We know better. Don't worry. By cutting, we're going to make it more cost-efficient." How?

**Interjection.**

**The Acting Speaker:** Order.

**M. Marchese:** C'est Monsieur Beaubien qui participe dans la discussion, et j'aime l'écouter. J'espère qu'il aura l'occasion de parler plus tard.

**M. Pouliot:** Mais jamais, mon collègue, jamais.

**M. Marchese:** Je l'espère. The member for York Mills says, and uses the words, "We are eliminating library boards." Take note of the language: "eliminating." He doesn't talk about merging, which is a little more euphemistic. He doesn't say, "We are bringing them together in order to make it more efficient." He says "eliminating," which is the language of autocracy, which is the language of a dictatorial approach to the issues.

The minister without portfolio for privatization is nodding his head, saying, "That's not true." This multi-headed companion piece, monster, mythical hydra before us will not make for more efficient services. We have no evidence for that.

**Interjection.**

**Mr Marchese:** Minister of Citizenship, you say, "Yes," but —

**Hon Ms Mushinski:** When you need six administrations —

**Mr Marchese:** When a government presents something before the House, they ordinarily would have some information before them that would say, "Here is the evidence." There is absolutely —

**Interjection.**

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**The Acting Speaker:** Order. We would all like to hear the member for Fort York and his interesting remarks about the motion that's in front of us. It's only Monday. Let's hear the member out.

**Mr Marchese:** Thank you very much for your support, Speaker. I appreciate it.

We are dealing again with the comments made by the member for York Mills where he says these are mere technical matters. Some of it might be, but when the government says that historical boards are all being merged, I don't see that as a technical matter. Do you? Does the public think this is a technical issue? I think it's a complicated issue, very political, and it has implications.

Merging historical boards indeed will create serious concerns and does for me in Toronto in terms of its implications. Will that lead to greater historical resources in the current city of Toronto? Will it get more attention? Will it get the attention it deserves? We argue and the historical boards argue, in Toronto that's not likely to happen. They're worried about a diminution of services and I tell you, that is all we're going to get: a diminution of services and nothing less.

The member for York Mills says that library boards and public health boards are being merged.

**Interjection.**

**Mr Marchese:** Bill 148 says that, Minister of Citizenship, it's there. They're being merged. The member for York Mills says it's technical. I don't find it that technical. Speaker, do you think that's a technical issue? I don't think you do.

**Hon Ms Mushinski:** It's a sensible issue.

**Mr Marchese:** I don't think it's a sensible one either. I think it's a matter of worry. If indeed services were to be increased everybody would be happy, nobody would worry, but everybody indeed is worried because when it costs \$200 million to bring this bill about, people are worried about where that money is going to come from.

When the transition team says to all of the various cities, "You've got to cut 15% of your budgets," that's a serious worry. Public ed boards, library boards and historical boards are all very worried, and rightfully so. They need to worry because the premise of this government of course is that they've got to cut — they say to make it

better, but in cutting it they're cutting services. That is the bottom line. That's what it means.

My good friend, Mr Johnson, the Chair of Management Board, says the cities are still going to be there. Of course they're going to be there. Where else are they going to go?

**Hon Ms Mushinski:** Exactly.

**Hon Rob Sampson (Minister without Portfolio [Privatization]):** What's the problem?

**Mr Marchese:** A number of ministers are saying, "What's the problem?" The problem is not that East York is going to disappear, member from High Park. It's what happens to the democracy and the democratic process and the ability of the public in East York to be able to reach the mayor.

In the past they could do that. But in the future, when they've got to deal with a huge megacity, they're going to have a hard time getting hold of the mayor elected, as they're having a hard time getting hold of the Premier. It's the same comparison, it's the same problem, unless you're a rich Tory, and then you're going to have access to them, or a developer or a rich landlord or a rich banker, in which case you're going to reach the Premier and you're going to reach whoever gets elected. Otherwise, you're not going to be able to reach them.

That's the problem we're dealing with. The problem we're dealing with is access, not that East York is going to disappear, because to all intents and purposes it cannot disappear unless you blow it up, which this government is capable of doing, I suspect. But if they're not going to blow it up, it won't disappear. But that's not the issue. The issue is access. The issue is democracy.

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker:** Order.

**Mr Marchese:** The issue is having the ability to influence your council, which you cannot do. With this new megacity you will not be able to have the power to be able to influence the mayor and all of those few councillors —

**Hon Mr Sampson:** I can see it now. We will blow it up, the NDP says.

**The Acting Speaker:** Order.

**Mr Marchese:** Speaker, in your gesture for order, we see reflected again the arrogance of these fellows across from me. You see the arrogance. You see the dismissive nature of their character and their comments. You see the haste, as I indicated, you see the autocracy, and you see the dictatorial character of these people across from me. I see it daily, and the public is seeing it. They smile as they tumble in the polls. Rome is burning and they're smiling.

Maybe that's the best way to handle their disappearance from this province. I'm not sure. Maybe that's why they're doing it. But I tell you the reason you are tumbling in the polls is that you are moving in such a way that people are frightened of what you are doing. They see that you are introducing bills day in and day out. They don't know what you are doing. They don't know the effects of what you are doing, and in fact they are afraid of what you are doing, because they feel you don't know what you are doing. That's why you're tumbling.

But all of you are very confident you're going to get elected, as indeed many of our members in our previous government were confident they were going to get re-elected. I tell you, I see the same fate for many of you, and if you have the smarts to see it, you will slow down the agenda and save Ontario. Save Ontario by doing less. Save us by not hurting us with a new bill every other day. That's what people are reaching out for, but you people are not listening.

Rent control: I have been in those hearings on rent control in the previous tenant package, and then I saw it in the tenant protection bill. These people come smiling every day: "We're listening. We are a government that listens. We like to listen. You see how we listen." The public knows you are not listening. The public sees you are not listening, and the fact that you pretend you are makes it worse.

What can we say about the son of megacity? It is as bad as Bill 103. The effects of it are as bad. I can only suggest to this government that you are not just moving too fast; you are making a serious mistake. Moving fast is only part of your mistake. The big part of the mistake is that you don't know what you're doing, and you're doing it with such haste that you're hurting us all. You're hurting us all.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Marchese:** I have the member for Nepean here coming to support the comments I am making. That's why he is here, I'm assuming. He's young enough to be able to learn from what we are doing in this place, and I hope that some of these guys and women on the other side are listening in order to protect your own interests. But I tell you, slow down your agenda, slow down and listen, not to the opposition, because you are wont not to do so, but listen to what the public is telling you, and they are telling you through the polls. Slow it down, retreat, eliminate, get rid of some of these bills that are hurting Ontario and that are hurting you especially. I'm looking forward to the debate that will pursue this ugliness of this government.

**The Acting Speaker:** Mr Johnson has moved government notice of motion number 34. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour say "aye."

All those opposed say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

*The division bells rang from 1759 to 1804.*

**The Acting Speaker :** All those in favour, please rise one at a time.

#### Ayes

Baird, John R.	Gilchrist, Steve	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Beaubien, Marcel	Grimmett, Bill	Parker, John L.
Boushy, Dave	Hardeman, Ernie	Preston, Peter
Chudleigh, Ted	Hastings, John	Ross, Lillian
Clement, Tony	Hodgson, Chris	Sampson, Rob
Cunningham, Dianne	Jackson, Cameron	Shea, Derwyn
Danford, Harry	Johns, Helen	Sheehan, Frank
DeFaria, Carl	Johnson, David	Sterling, Norman W.
Doyle, Ed	Jordan, W. Leo	Stewart, R. Gary
Elliott, Brenda	Klees, Frank	Turnbull, David
Fisher, Barbara	Leadston, Gary L.	Vankoughnet, Bill

Flaherty, Jim  
Ford, Douglas B.  
Fox, Gary  
Froese, Tom  
Galt, Doug

Maves, Bart  
Mushinski, Marilyn  
Newman, Dan  
O'Toole, John

Villeneuve, Noble  
Wettlaufer, Wayne  
Wood, Bob  
Young, Terence H.

Christopherson, David  
Churley, Marilyn  
Cleary, John C.

Kormos, Peter  
Marchese, Rosario  
Martel, Shelley

Pouliot, Gilles  
Silipo, Tony

**The Acting Speaker:** Those opposed, please rise one at a time.

**Nays**

Bisson, Gilles  
Bradley, James J.  
Castrilli, Annamarie

Gerretsen, John  
Gravelle, Michael  
Hoy, Pat

Martin, Tony  
McLeod, Lyn  
Patten, Richard

**Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers):** The ayes are 46; the nays are 17.

**The Acting Speaker:** I declare the motion carried.

It being past 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock tomorrow.

*The House adjourned at 1807.*

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO**  
**ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO**

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneure: Hon / L'hon Hilary M. Weston

Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Chris Stockwell

Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers

Clerk Assistant / Greffière adjointe: Deborah Deller

Clerks at the Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Algoma	Wildman, Bud (ND)	Frontenac-Addington	Vankoughnet, Bill (PC)
Algoma-Manitoulin	Brown, Michael A. (L)	Grey-Owen Sound	Murdoch, Bill (PC)
Beaches-Woodbine	Lankin, Frances (ND)	Guelph	Elliott, Brenda (PC)
Brampton North / -Nord	Spina, Joseph (PC)	Halton Centre / -Centre	Young, Terence H. (PC)
Brampton South / -Sud	Clement, Tony (PC)	Halton North / -Nord	Chudleigh, Ted (PC)
Brant-Haldimand	Preston, Peter L. (PC)	Hamilton Centre / -Centre	Christopherson, David (ND)
Brantford	Johnson, Ron (PC)	Hamilton East / -Est	Agostino, Dominic (L)
Bruce	Fisher, Barbara (PC)	Hamilton Mountain	Pettit, Trevor (PC)
Burlington South / -Sud	<b>Jackson, Hon / L'hon Cameron</b> (PC) Minister without Portfolio (seniors issues) / ministre sans portefeuille (affaires des personnes âgées)	Hamilton West / -Ouest	Ross, Lillian (PC)
Cambridge	Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Hastings-Peterborough	Danford, Harry (PC)
Carleton	<b>Sterling, Hon / L'hon Norman W.</b> (PC) Minister of Environment and Energy / ministre de l'Environnement et de l'Énergie	High Park-Swansea	Shea, Derwyn (PC)
Carleton East / -Est	Morin, Gilles E. (L)	Huron	Johns, Helen (PC)
Chatham-Kent	Carroll, Jack (PC)	Kenora	Miclash, Frank (L)
Cochrane North / -Nord	Wood, Len (ND)	Kingston and The Islands / Kingston et Les Îles	Gerretsen, John (L)
Cochrane South / -Sud	Bisson, Gilles (ND)	Kitchener	Wettlaufer, Wayne (PC)
Cornwall	Cleary, John C. (L)	Kitchener-Wilmot	Leadston, Gary L. (PC)
Don Mills	<b>Johnson, Hon / L'hon David</b> (PC) Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, government House leader / président du Conseil de gestion, leader parlementaire du gouvernement	Lake Nipigon / Lac-Nipigon	Pouliot, Gilles (ND)
Dovercourt	Silipo, Tony (ND)	Lambton	Beaubien, Marcel (PC)
Downsview	Castrilli, Annamaria (L)	Lanark-Renfrew	Jordan, W. Leo (PC)
Dufferin-Peel	Tilson, David (PC)	Lawrence	Cordiano, Joseph (L)
Durham Centre / -Centre	Flaherty, Jim (PC)	Leeds-Grenville	<b>Runciman, Hon / L'hon Robert W.</b> (PC) Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services / solliciteur général et ministre des Services correctionnels
Durham East / -Est	O'Toole, John R. (PC)	Lincoln	Sheehan, Frank (PC)
Durham West / -Ouest	<b>Ecker, Hon / L'hon Janet</b> (PC) Minister of Community and Social Services / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires	London Centre / -Centre	Boyd, Marion (ND)
Durham-York	Munro, Julia (PC)	London North / -Nord	<b>Cunningham, Hon / L'hon Dianne</b> (PC) Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Eglinton	<b>Saunderson, Hon / L'hon William</b> (PC) Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism / ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et du Tourisme	London South / -Sud	Wood, Bob (PC)
Elgin	North, Peter (Ind)	Markham	<b>Tsubouchi, Hon / L'hon David H.</b> (PC) Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations / ministre de la Consommation et du Commerce
Essex-Kent	Hoy, Pat (L)	Middlesex	Smith, Bruce (PC)
Essex South / -Sud	Crozier, Bruce (L)	Mississauga East / -Est	DeFaria, Carl (PC)
Etobicoke-Humber	Ford, Douglas B. (PC)	Mississauga North / -Nord	<b>Snobelen, Hon / L'hon John</b> (PC) Minister of Education and Training / ministère de l'Éducation et de la Formation
Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Kells, Morley (PC)	Mississauga South / -Sud	Marland, Margaret (PC)
Etobicoke-Rexdale	Hastings, John (PC)	Mississauga West / -Ouest	<b>Sampson, Hon / L'hon Rob</b> (PC) Minister without Portfolio (privatization) / ministre sans portefeuille (privatisation)
Etobicoke West / -Ouest	<b>Stockwell, Hon / L'hon Chris</b> (PC) Speaker / président	Muskoka-Georgian Bay / Muskoka-Baie-Georgienne	Grimmett, Bill (PC)
Fort William	McLeod, Lyn (L)	Nepean	Baird, John R. (PC)
Fort York	Marchese, Rosario (ND)	Niagara Falls	Maves, Bart (PC)

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Niagara South / -Sud	Hudak, Tim (PC)	Sarnia	Boushy, Dave (PC)
Nickel Belt	Laughren, Floyd (ND)	Sault Ste Marie /	
Nipissing	<b>Harris, Hon / L'hon Michael D.</b> (PC) Premier and President of the Executive Council / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif	Sault-Sainte-Marie	Martin, Tony (ND)
Norfolk	Barrett, Toby (PC)	Scarborough-Agincourt	Phillips, Gerry (L)
Northumberland	Galt, Doug (PC)	Scarborough Centre / -Centre	Newman, Dan (PC)
Oakville South / -Sud	Carr, Gary (PC)	Scarborough East / -Est	Gilchrist, Steve (PC)
Oakwood	Colle, Mike (L)	Scarborough-Ellesmere	<b>Mushinski, Hon / L'hon Marilyn</b> (PC) Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation / ministre des Affaires civiques, de la Culture et des Loisirs
Oriole	Vacant		
Oshawa	Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Scarborough North / -Nord	Curling, Alvin (L)
Ottawa Centre / -Centre	Patten, Richard (L)	Scarborough West / -Ouest	Brown, Jim (PC)
Ottawa East / -Est	Grandmaître, Bernard (L)	Simcoe Centre / -Centre	Tascona, Joseph N. (PC)
Ottawa-Rideau	Guzzo, Garry J. (PC)	Simcoe East / -Est	McLean, Allan K. (PC)
Ottawa South / -Sud	McGuinty, Dalton (L) Leader of the Opposition / chef de l'opposition	Simcoe West / -Ouest	<b>Wilson, Hon / L'hon Jim</b> (PC) Minister of Health / ministre de la Santé
Ottawa West / -Ouest	Vacant		
Oxford	Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Sudbury	Bartolucci, Rick (L)
Parkdale	Ruprecht, Tony (L)	Sudbury East / -Est	Martel, Shelley (ND)
Parry Sound	<b>Eves, Hon / L'hon Ernie L.</b> (PC) Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance / vice-premier ministre, ministre des Finances	Timiskaming	Ramsay, David (L)
	Johnson, Bert (PC)	Victoria-Haliburton	<b>Hodgson, Hon / L'hon Chris</b> (PC) Minister of Natural Resources, Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre des Richesses naturelles, ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Perth	Stewart, R. Gary (PC)		
Peterborough	Gravelle, Michael (L)		
Port Arthur			
Prescott and Russell /			
Prescott et Russell	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Waterloo North / -Nord	<b>Witmer, Hon / L'hon Elizabeth</b> (PC) Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail
Prince Edward-Lennox-			
South Hastings /			
Prince Edward-Lennox-			
Hastings-Sud	Fox, Gary (PC)	Welland-Thorold	Kormos, Peter (ND)
Quinte	Rollins, E.J. Douglas (PC)	Wellington	Arnott, Ted (PC)
Rainy River	Hampton, Howard (ND) Leader of the New Democratic Party / Chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique	Wentworth East / -Est	Doyle, Ed (PC)
	Conway, Sean G. (L)	Wentworth North / -Nord	Skarica, Toni (PC)
Renfrew North / -Nord	Churley, Marilyn (ND)	Willowdale	<b>Harnick, Hon / L'hon Charles</b> (PC) Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
Riverdale			
S-D-G & East Grenville /			
S-D-G et Grenville-Est	Villeneuve, Hon / L'hon Noble (PC) Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales, ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones	Wilson Heights	Kwinter, Monte (L)
	Bassett, Isabel (PC)	Windsor-Riverside	Vacant
St Andrew-St Patrick	Bradley, James J. (L)	Windsor-Sandwich	Pupatello, Sandra (L)
St Catharines	Froese, Tom (PC)	Windsor-Walkerville	Duncan, Dwight (L)
St Catharines-Brock	Leach, Hon / L'hon Al (PC) Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement	York Centre / -Centre	<b>Palladini, Hon / L'hon Al</b> (PC) Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports
St George-St David		York East / -Est	Parker, John L. (PC)
		York Mills	Turnbull, David (PC)
		York-Mackenzie	Klees, Frank (PC)
		Yorkview	Sergio, Mario (L)
		York South / -Sud	Kennedy, Gerard (L)

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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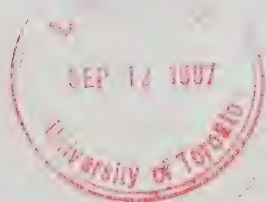
Première session, 36<sup>e</sup> législature

**Official Report  
of Debates  
(Hansard)**

**Journal  
des débats  
(Hansard)**

**Tuesday 9 September 1997**

**Mardi 9 septembre 1997**



Speaker  
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Président  
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

Clerk  
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier  
Claude L. DesRosiers

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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 9 September 1997

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 9 septembre 1997

*The House met at 1335.  
Prayers.*

### MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

#### MINISTER OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

**Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury):** Today I hold in my hand another example which confirms the level of incompetence which is synonymous with this Minister of Education and Training. It is a sample of the carte de competence, or teacher's qualification card, recently put out for francophone teachers in this province. This form is filled with spelling errors, grammar errors and structural errors.

I gave this form to a grade 3 French teacher and asked her, using the new report card which clearly measures student achievement, to grade the minister's performance. Sadly, the minister didn't do very well.

On spelling she gave the minister an R, meaning: "The student has not demonstrated the required knowledge and skills. Extensive remediation is required." In grammar she gave the minister a D minus, which means, "The student has demonstrated some of the required knowledge and skills but in limited ways." In structures she gave the minister another R.

On a national level, this Minister of Education fell below the norm. The people of Ontario deserve more for their hard-earned money. We deserve the best-trained Minister of Education. We deserve a Minister of Education who exceeds the national average. But what do we have? We have a mediocre minister putting out mediocre policies.

#### GAMING INITIATIVES

**Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold):** This government launches yet another attack on another sector in the small business community. While the break-open ticket industry, with its 60 to 70 gaming equipment suppliers across Ontario, like Mr Nevada up on Merrittville Highway in Niagara, works with hundreds and hundreds of hospitals and charities raising money so that these hospitals and charities can continue to function, especially in a time of dramatic and cruel government cutbacks to health care and other transfer payment agencies, what has

this government done? This government proposes to put out of business every one of those approximately 70 gaming equipment suppliers here in Ontario, shut down all but one, possibly two, of the break-open ticket manufacturers, with a loss of jobs that will count in the hundreds, if not more. I tell you, that is criminal.

It's augmented by the fact that the government wants to scoop another 6% of the prize board from the break-open ticket industry, knowing full well that when that prize board drops below 70%, which it will if the government has its greedy hands in there, the sale of break-open tickets diminishes radically.

This government talks a big game about small business, but it simply doesn't deliver and it simply doesn't care. I join with Mr Nevada and its colleague companies in the gaming equipment supply industry and the break-open ticket industry in calling upon this government to end this foolish attack on that small business sector now and not repeat it again.

#### MOTHER TERESA

**Mr John L. Parker (York East):** The world had not yet absorbed the shock of the tragic death of Princess Diana when another outstanding world figure was taken from us — Mother Teresa.

Mother Teresa lived the faith that she believed. She grew up in Skopje in a household of modest means but in which no person in need was ever a stranger. She joined the Loretto nuns before she was 20 and was sent to serve in India, a country whose language she could not speak. While there, she heard the call not just to serve the poor but to become one of them, to live in the slums of Calcutta and to serve among the poorest of the world's poor. This became her life's work.

Among her greatest admirers, and perhaps the man who made her a media star, was Malcolm Muggeridge. He had a unique understanding and appreciation for the work of Mother Teresa. In his words:

"Most of what she and her Missionaries of Charity do is, in worldly terms, patently absurd. For instance, salvaging derelicts from the streets just for them to have the comfort of seeing, even for a few hours or minutes, a loving face and receiving loving care, rather than closing their eyes on a world implacably hostile, or at best indifferent, whether they lived or died."

Mother Teresa held to her faith and her beliefs against all of the dogmas of the contemporary secular world. For that reason, she has been regarded by some as controver-

sial. Perhaps, though, the greatest controversy brought by Mother Teresa is the challenge that her life poses to each one of us to serve tirelessly, with humility and dedication, to be indifferent to things material and to hold in reverence at all times the miracle and sanctity of life.

### MINISTER OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

**Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William):** Did Mike Harris lend the Minister of Education his son's copy of Mr Silly? It seems that Mr Silly must have made it on to John Snobelen's reading list. Indeed, it may be the only book that he uses as a reference. "Silly" certainly seems to be the only word left in the minister's vocabulary.

Kathy Haas, chairperson of the Etobicoke Board of Education, expressed her concern that the government's proposed funding for heat, light and maintenance in our schools would be inadequate. She brought attention to her concerns by suggesting that children would have to wear mittens to sit in cold classrooms. The minister, ignoring her very real concern, as he always does, just said she was silly.

School board officials, expressing their concern that reduced provincial funding would mean the closure of schools, the loss of special education or the elimination of junior kindergarten, don't deserve a serious answer from the minister, it seems. After all, says John Snobelen, they are all just silly.

Opposition critics are just silly too, although we are granted some credit for at least being misinformed and just plain wrong. I was wrong, for example, to suggest that the minister is about to spend taxpayers' dollars trying to sell his government's misdirection for education. But lo and behold, today at 3:30 he will launch his new PR program.

What could be more just plain silly than a Minister of Education who talks about meeting the needs of every student when he has cut half a billion dollars out of education and is planning to cut \$750 million more? The problem is, this isn't really silly when it comes from the man who controls the dollars and sets the priorities that affect our children's education. It's serious and it's truly scary.

### MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

**Mr Len Wood (Cochrane North):** The restructuring process in the north is not working. In an article published a couple of weeks ago in the Sudbury Star, the Minister of Northern Development and Mines gave a very rosy picture of the restructuring process in northern Ontario, saying, among other things, that the government is following up on the good suggestions made by northern leaders.

The same week in the Northern Times, Kirkland Lake Mayor Joe Mavrinac said that municipal members of the Who Does What transition teams, on which Mayor Mavrinac sits, are very frustrated by the whole restructuring process and are refusing to continue until they meet with Premier Harris.

The members of the transition teams feel that all information should be on the table when making important and irreversible decisions like amalgamation. They want to know if there's any flexibility along the implementation dates and initiatives this government is forcing them to put in place by January 1. They want to know how the financial impacts for each and every community are going to affect them. They want to know what assumptions the government is using to calculate their numbers because of the fact they don't match the municipalities' ones when we're talking about the transfer of roads and the transfer of the cost of policing and all these services on to the municipalities. Which figures do they go by?

It's very unfair and ridiculous for this government to ask the transition teams to comment and make a decision when municipal leaders don't have half of the information they need to make an informed decision.

### YOUNG OFFENDERS

**Mr Douglas B. Ford (Etobicoke-Humber):** Last night in my riding I had the pleasure of hosting a public forum on youth crime. I was also joined by members of the Crime Control Commission of Ontario. As well, the meeting was attended by a broad range of individuals and included representatives of youth, seniors, police, rate-payers, the local crime prevention association and other members of the public who want to see youth crime reduced.

What all of these people have in common is that the concern about the issues involving crime, justice and community safety brought them to this public meeting to speak out. The discussion included many constructive ideas to do with young offenders and ways to curtail any future criminal activity. It was clearly evident that those at this meeting favoured strict discipline measures for young offenders. In fact, the forum's audience supported a resident's suggestion to increase the use of strict discipline facilities.

While some may be critical of use of strict discipline facilities, I challenge any of you to look in the eyes of a victim of crime and explain your reasoning.

This government is continually focused on the goal to reduce youth crime in order to make our communities safer. My appreciation goes out to those who contributed to last night's forum.

### PAY EQUITY

**Ms Annamarie Castrilli (Downsview):** I rise today to renew the attention of this Legislature to a court decision made by Mr Justice Dennis O'Leary on Friday that has serious implications for this government's agenda.

On behalf of Carlene Chambers and Kara Valian, the Service Employees International Union brought a case against this government charging that schedule J of the infamous Bill 26 unfairly discriminated against them by removing the proxy method of comparison for the purposes of pay equity. Schedule J capped the employer's

ability to honour pay equity adjustments by requiring that no more than 3% of its 1993 payroll be devoted to closing the wage gap.

As Judge O'Leary noted, the proxy method was removed without any study of its efficacy. Its removal has allowed this government to meet its fiscal targets at the expense of women who face the greatest amount of pay inequity. It is an absolute disgrace that in their revolutionary zeal the Tories have trampled on discriminated working women and flagrantly disregarded the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

People all over Ontario are calling on this government to slow down, as indeed we indicated when the bully bill, Bill 26, was passed into legislation. This is a stinging condemnation of this government's incompetence and disregard for women in this province. Slow down.

### ONTARIO HYDRO

**Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt):** The Minister of Energy, responsible for Ontario Hydro, has declared that he wants to appoint a legislative committee to look into the problems at Ontario Hydro and particularly Ontario Hydro nuclear. This party does not agree with that position. We believe there needs to be an independent commission to investigate the problems at Hydro, both in terms of how we got to where we are now and where we go in the future for restructuring. We do not think that a legislative committee dominated by neo-cons from the Tory back bench is the way to plot the future of Ontario Hydro.

We believe the mandate for such a commission should be as follows:

To investigate the economic, environmental and safety issues that led Hydro to its August 1997 decision to lay up seven reactors and embark on a multibillion-dollar restructuring plan.

To examine Hydro's multibillion-dollar recovery plan to determine whether it is the most economically, environmentally friendly, safe alternative for providing Ontario with reliable power supply or whether there are more suitable alternatives within the framework of public power.

To examine the government's promised white paper on the electricity industry restructuring and alternatives to it. Issues around what will happen to Hydro's debt, access to the Hydro grid and ensuring environmental and consumer protection should be a particular focus.

### PEEL COUNTY COURTHOUSE

**Mr Tony Clement (Brampton South):** I'm pleased to announce the reopening of the historic Peel county courthouse. At the grand opening, Peel council will be holding a re-enactment of an early council meeting. This is a fitting way to celebrate the opening of the restored building.

This is an excellent example of making one of Brampton's most important heritage buildings suitable for today's needs, and I'm glad that the government of Ontario

was able to play a part in funding this project. The provincial government is helping to finance a number of projects like this across the province for a very important reason: We want to revitalize Ontario's economy. More importantly, we want to create a positive economic climate to attract new business and investment for our province. Witness the 33,000 net new jobs in August alone in this province, over 1,000 net new jobs a day.

One important element in attracting business to a community is the infrastructure of that community, the condition of the roads and bridges, the schools, the municipal buildings, the recreational facilities and so forth. Our communities should have top-quality infrastructure if we are to succeed in a global economy. Put simply, we have to invest in Ontario.

With this project, we celebrate our past along with taking another step in rebuilding Ontario's economy and creating a more prosperous future for us all.

1350

### VISITOR

**Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like to point out that the former member for Windsor-Walkerville, now the current member for Windsor-Riverside, is here in the gallery with us.

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Do you know what? If you had waited for me and I had introduced him, then the cameras would have gone on him and it would have been better for you. Now I can't do that.

Welcome. I guess we'll be seeing more of you next week.

### MOTIONS

#### PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

**Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Government House Leader):** I have a motion with regard to the order of private members' business. I move that notwithstanding standing order 96(d), Mr Shea and Mr McLean exchange places in the order of precedence for private members' public business, and that notwithstanding standing order 95(g), the requirement for notice be waived with respect to ballot item 99.

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Is it the pleasure of the House the motion carry? Carried.

**Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I ask for unanimous consent for second reading of the private member's bill introduced into the House yesterday, entitled the Regional Municipality of Sudbury Statute Law Amendment Act, which will allow for the direct election of chair of the regional municipality of Sudbury.

**The Speaker:** Is there unanimous consent to debate Bill 156, second reading? I hear a no.

## STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

### FINANCIAL STATEMENT

**Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance):** Just over two years ago, this government was elected to deliver on a commitment to balance the budget and cut taxes for all Ontarians. After previous governments' 65 tax increases, doubling spending and tripling debt, we pledged to make a major change. We promised the people of Ontario we would get the finances of this province under control again and make the province of Ontario the land of opportunity it should be. We are delivering on our commitments.

Today I am pleased to submit to this Legislature the 1996-97 public accounts, which show that we are clearly turning the corner in the fight against the deficit, and as we promised, we will balance the books by the fiscal year 2000-01. I am pleased to announce that the actual 1996-97 deficit was \$6.9 billion. That is fully \$1.9 billion lower than the 1995-96 deficit and a further half a billion dollars lower than the deficit estimate announced in our May 1997 budget.

Today I am also releasing the 1997 annual report of the province of Ontario for the fiscal year ended March 31, 1997. Our second annual report, like the first, highlights the government's financial achievements. In presenting the annual report today, I also want to emphasize that we are committed to giving all Ontarians access to information on our province's fiscal position and on the government's financial and economic performance compared to the goals we set.

Unlike previous governments, we are reducing the deficit and cutting taxes at the same time. We have always said that if Ontarians were only allowed to keep more of their own money, they would spend it and that, in turn, would increase tax revenues. The public accounts show that this is exactly the case. In the fiscal year 1996-97, tax revenues were up by \$2.2 billion from the fiscal year 1995-96. Obviously, the plan is working.

While Ontario has 39% of the national labour force, we are outpacing the rest of the country in job creation. In fact, in August 60% of all new jobs created in the entire country were created in Ontario. In the last six months, employment in Ontario grew more than twice as much as the rest of Canada combined. Over the last 12 months, Ontario's help wanted index jumped 27%. Since the throne speech in September 1995, a total of 268,000 new jobs in the private sector have been created in Ontario. In that same period, more than 173,000 people have left the welfare rolls.

The evidence is clear: It is possible to cut government spending, reduce the deficit, cut taxes, reform the welfare

system and strengthen the economy. The evidence is everywhere as Ontario continues to outperform the rest of the country.

Consumer confidence, one of our most important indicators, is up for the sixth straight quarter, increasing by an additional 10.6% in the April-to-June period. The Ontario economy continues to accelerate. For the first calendar quarter of this year, Ontario's real GDP almost doubled the national rate of 3.7%.

The Conference Board of Canada, in its latest provincial forecast, projects that the Ontario economy will post the fastest growth in the country in 1997, led by stronger consumer spending and continued gains in export-oriented industries.

Over the first half of 1997, manufacturing shipments are up 6.8% and Ontario exports are up 6%. Over the first eight months of this year, housing starts in Ontario are up 33.1% from a year ago, much stronger than the 20.9% national rise. So far this year, in the Toronto area new home sales have increased 53.1% and resales have risen 16.4%.

Statistics Canada's recent Investment Intentions Survey reports that Ontario businesses plan to raise plant and equipment spending by 11.8% in 1997. Residential spending is projected to rise by 20.1% this year.

This is all good news for Ontarians and for the future of this province. Our plan to cut taxes and create jobs is working. Clearly, those who say it is not cannot ignore these facts. All the economic indicators demonstrate that we are continuing in the right direction, and as a result Ontario is prospering.

A lot has been accomplished but there is a lot of work left to do. Ontarians are feeling optimistic about their future, and rightly so.

**Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt):** Let me respond to —

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** I don't want to caution the member for Ottawa-Rideau any more. If I do, I'll have to name you.

**1400**

**Mr Phillips:** I want to respond to the minister's statement and speak on behalf of the people who weren't here to stand and clap for that address.

Who has paid for this fiscal situation? The young people whose tuition fees have gone up enormously. The government promised they would not increase tuition fees beyond 25% of the cost. They broke that promise and it is the young people of Ontario who are paying for this.

Who else is paying for it? The property taxpayers of Ontario. Mike Harris has decided to dump \$660 million of provincial cost from the province on to property tax. The members who stood today and clapped for this fiscal statement will have to go out and explain to the property taxpayers why they dumped \$660 million of extra cost on to property tax.

This document, the Common Sense Revolution, promised the seniors of this province that you would introduce "no new user fees on drugs." You broke that promise

completely. Seniors are paying \$100 plus user fees. You said you wouldn't do that and you did that. You broke that promise.

You said you would protect health care. You are going to freeze health spending for 10 years. For 10 years health spending in this province would not go up. The population is growing by roughly a million people, our seniors are growing in significant numbers, but you are funding this fiscal statement on the backs of our health care system, freezing it for 10 years and cutting \$1 billion —

**Mr David Turnbull (York Mills):** You said you were going to spend \$17 billion, for goodness' sake.

**Mr Phillips:** I know you don't want to hear that, but that is a fact.

**The Speaker:** Order. I'm not going to warn the government whip either. You've got to come to order. The minister was allowed to make the statement. The responses have to be allowed to be made.

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker:** Member for Cochrane North, I'm quite capable of handling this particular uprising here.

I caution the government members, if you'd please come to order. Particularly the government whip, it would be very helpful if you could come to order.

**Mr Phillips:** To go on with the health issue, you've cut \$1 billion out of our hospital budgets. If you want to spend more money on health care, say so, but right now Mike Harris says we're spending plenty on health. We need to spend no more money. Freezing the health budget for 10 years; that's how you're funding this.

You proudly say, "We've cut the number of people on welfare dramatically." I would just say to you, look at the employment numbers. When Mike Harris became Premier of Ontario, there were 499,000 people out of work; today there are 487,000 people out of work, virtually the same number of people out of work. Those aren't my numbers, they're the government numbers: Virtually the same number of people are out of work today as when Mike Harris became Premier.

You can proudly say, "We've cut this number of people off welfare," but where are they? Exactly the same number of people are still looking for work, unemployed as when Mike Harris became Premier.

I would say particularly tragic is the unemployment rate among our young people. I remember Mike Harris, when I raised this a year ago, said: "You're full of hot air. I don't trust your numbers." What are the numbers?

*Interjections.*

**Mr Phillips:** You don't want to hear about unemployment. I would say to the young people of Ontario, listen to this. This is the Conservative caucus bellowing about youth unemployment. It is a tragedy.

Youth unemployment in this province for the first eight months of this year is up dramatically. Last year, for the first eight months, the unemployment rate among our young people was roughly 15%. This year it is 18%. It is a tragedy, yet this document today proudly announces how great things are in Ontario. I would say to you people that

if you believe it's so great among our young people, you are completely out of touch with the real world.

I realize you don't like to hear this, but this is what Ontario needs to tell you. You are funding your fiscal plan on the backs of the most vulnerable in this province. Our young people: You're taking their tuition fees up. You're cutting services for our young people. You're cutting support for education. You're cutting support for health care. And you proudly say, "Employment is just great" when there are virtually the same number of people out of work today as when Mike Harris became Premier.

I think a statement today that smugly says, "Everything is fine," is wrong. You are wrong to assume everything is fine. We have significant, dramatic problems in the province. To fund the tax cut that benefits the best off — without any question, the tax cut funds those best off in this province. We all know who is paying for it. It is the most vulnerable.

So I don't stand and applaud this statement today. I take it as an indication of smugness and arrogance by a government that is out of touch.

**Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon):** I too welcome an opportunity to respond to the Minister of Finance's statement. I have with me a copy of the Common Sense Revolution and would wish to draw your attention to page 18: "This plan will balance the Ontario budget within our first mandate." I also have the statement which has just been released and read. It says "in the fiscal year 2000-01." Are we to assume that no elections will be held before April 1, the beginning of the fiscal year of the year 2000? I'm trying to help the minister, as always, and trying to reconcile both documents.

"We are delivering on our commitment." At what cost? On the backs of the most vulnerable, the marginalized, on the backs of the poor, those who can least defend themselves. A chance to live has been taken from those people. That's the commitment this government is delivering on.

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker:** I would caution the member for Mississauga South to come to order. I don't want to have to warn her again.

**Mr Pouliot:** Another quote from the minister: "Obviously our plan is working." I think the minister is right, in all fairness. If you make \$247,000 per year the government plan is working, because you shall pocket \$15,000 in tax cuts. If you have a family of four and if you make a mere \$25,000, you will only benefit to the tune of \$450 per year. Simply put, a person making \$25,000 and a person making \$250,000: 10 times the earnings equals 30 times the tax savings. Yes, the plan is working; if you're rich, if you're fortunate in our society, the plan is working big time. However, if you're marginalized, if you're trying to make ends meet, trying to make the mortgage payments, the plan is a failure.

Eliminating the deficit? The deficit is to be found among our youth, people who have no hope, almost 20% of them simply not working. The deficit is to be found in the false promise, the pretext of 725,000 jobs. Those are

real human deficits. Nothing else matters: the essence of life. You can't fool people with numbers.

Proud indeed. He who takes the credit shall take the blame. How do we arrive at these figures. Simply put, the Ministry of Education: The 1993-94 budget was \$8.691 billion. Well, subtract about \$400 million. That's how you make ends meet to justify the tax cut, which will cost \$5 billion.

If you're with the Ministry of Health, a lot less dollars are being spent per capita. You can dance around the issue, but when all is said and done, the lineups are getting bigger. There are more and more people bent in half sent home in a taxi, more and more people lined up in the corridor.

Ministry of Municipal Affairs: another downloading. People are scared and anxious because they will not release the figures, simply because they don't know the mess they're in, but they're passing the buck to the lowest common denominator. The property taxpayer will have to shoulder their ambitions. That's what it's all about.

Ministry of Natural Resources: budget cut from \$502 million in 1994 to \$426 million.

Ministry of Transportation: Are you with me, Al? You've cut your budget for roads — it's in the Common Sense Revolution as well — by \$300 million. It's shameful. We give heavily at the pump and then your government has the gall and the audacity to charge \$37 extra for northerners.

They're insatiable. Why? Because they're on the hook to the people who are rich, to the people who call the shots on behalf of this government. What you have is a chorus of seals that wish to be like them one day. Well, forget it, because you're getting it too. Wake up.

I wish I could applaud, but today is a sad day if you're not that fortunate.

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## ORAL QUESTIONS

### MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

**Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition):** My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs. I have in my hand a copy of a document put out by your government called *Your Ontario, Your Choice: A Preliminary Look at the Referendum Alternative*. I just want to quote a few sections in this document.

"Public participation in government is both desirable and intrinsically preferable to capture of the policymaking apparatus by special interest groups. Ontarians must once again feel like citizens with a stake in the public life of their province rather than as spectators who pay the bills but have little say in deciding what government does."

Then there's a quote from the Premier: "We feel, unlike other politicians, that referendums are a good idea and do not limit the ability to manage a government. We

don't think it's unreasonable for people to have those alternatives."

I'm just wondering, Minister, if you agree that referenda are a good idea.

**Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing):** Yes.

**Mr McGuinty:** You'll understand why I ask that: because the last time we held a number of referenda here in the immediate vicinity, in fact in Metropolitan Toronto, you rejected outright, in the most dismissive manner possible, the results of those referenda.

I'll tell you why I also am asking you, Minister. A couple of days ago, we learned that the election officer, the person in charge of running the elections here for the new megacity, has decided that the local municipalities involved in this will not be entitled to place referenda questions on the ballot. So I'm asking you once again, are you or are you not in favour of referenda?

**Hon Mr Leach:** I assume from the comments from the Leader of the Opposition that he is a big fan of referenda. I wonder where he flip-flopped this time from the statement that he made on February 1, 1997, when he stated, "I am not, generally speaking, a big fan of referenda." I hear the sound of a flip-flop, where suddenly we're a big fan of referenda.

**Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East):** You're in charge now.

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Member for Hamilton East, come to order. I'm not going to warn you again — one warning.

**Hon Mr Leach:** I assume the Leader of the Opposition is probably referring to the newspaper articles that were in the *Star* this morning that indicated that the existing municipalities within Metropolitan Toronto don't have the legal right to put a question on this fall's ballot. Technically, that's correct, but I can tell the Leader of the Opposition that I've already had a conversation with Mayor Hall in the city of Toronto and indicated to her that I would have our legal staff review the ramifications of putting through a regulation to allow that.

**Mr McGuinty:** A review isn't good enough, and I'm sure you understand that, Minister. I want you to commit here and now — it's very simple. Shortly you will have the opportunity to stand up and reply. I want you to tell us that Warren Bailie was wrong and that you are going to ensure that any municipality in the city of Toronto that chooses to place a referendum question on the ballot will be allowed to do so. It's as simple as that. Now stand up and tell me that is what's going to happen.

**Hon Mr Leach:** I realize that the Leader of the Opposition has his questions written out beforehand, but he might want to listen to the answers that were given.

I stated that I agree with the elections commissioner. His read of the legislation is correct, that the question cannot be legally put on the ballot at this time. I said that I've asked my legal officials to review that legislation to determine if there's a way and means of allowing that. I said right at the beginning I'm a believer in referendums, as is this government, if they're done in a proper manner.

As long as we can be assured that the referendum is done in a proper, precise manner, I'm all in favour of it and I hope we can accommodate the request.

#### STUDENT ASSISTANCE AND TUITION FEES

**Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition):** My second question is for the Minister of Education and Training. This morning a group representing more than one third of all university students in Ontario told you that debt loads and burdens on students today are fast approaching the unbearable. Let's review the record insofar as what has happened on your watch as minister.

You have cut funding to colleges and universities by \$386 million, so that now we are the lowest funder per capita in Canada when it comes to funding for our post-secondary institutions. Second, you have hiked tuition fees by 30% on your watch. Third, you have cut by some \$20 million the amounts for student summer employment programs in Ontario, making it even harder for students to acquire the funds they need to pursue their post-secondary studies.

My question for you, Minister, is very simple. When will you stop being the Minister of Education carrying out Mike Harris's cuts and start being the Minister of Education advocating on behalf of Ontario students?

**Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training):** To the Leader of the Opposition, that's not the record. The record is certainly more fulsome than that. Our ministry has been working over the course of the last two years to provide some very innovative supports for students. Our goal is very clear: to make sure that the students in Ontario have access to excellent-quality post-secondary education. That has been what we've been moving forward with in partnership with the post-secondary institutions.

I can remind the Leader of the Opposition that your cousins, your colleagues in Ottawa, are people we've called upon for some help in terms of the income-contingent loans package that we are currently working on, and I'd ask you to encourage them to go forward with this with full speed so that we can have a better program for helping everyone have accessibility to those excellent programs.

**Mr McGuinty:** The minister has talked for quite some time now about an income-contingent repayment scheme and that this somehow is going to be the magic elixir that's going to solve all the students' woes.

I want to tell you about two concerns that they have regarding your scheme for this new loan program. First of all, they believe it's going to be a Trojan horse that you're going to use to sneak in even further dramatic tuition fee hikes in Ontario. Second, what they told us this morning was that the average interest payment by all student borrowers will increase from approximately \$7,000 under the present OSAP system to \$24,000 in interest under your form of an income-contingent repayment scheme.

I want you to offer your guarantee right now, Minister, that students under your new scheme will be paying no more interest than they are under the existing scheme.

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**Hon Mr Snobelen:** As we go forward in developing the models for an income-contingent program, we will look at all of the circumstances — at the appropriate interest rate, at the appropriate amount of funds a person can provide.

The reason for this is obvious. It's so that we can have a program where people who graduate from post-secondary institutions have an opportunity to repay their fair share of the cost while as they earn more dollars in the work world. It's responsible to the real circumstances those people find themselves in. Again, we have been working for two years to move forward on this with the federal government. We were encouraged when it was referred to in the federal budget of a year ago. We hope that you will continue to talk to your colleagues in Ottawa and ask them to move forward with us on this to get the right model for the students in Ontario. It's critically important that we do this.

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Final supplementary

**Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough North):** Mr Minister, the students rejected your Tory student aid plan and called for a consultation. That was the cry we heard all morning. The program you put forward has been rejected by the students because they know it will hurt students who can least afford it.

Students who need financial assistance are being penalized if they make more than \$800 over the school year. Coupled with all the expenses being borne by students, which my leader just explained to you, you have now reworked the student aid program, forcing the poor to pay more. The Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance would like me to ask you to justify your program where interest payments on a \$31,000 loan will be an additional \$82,000 debt. How can you justify this debt load on the students who can least afford it?

**Hon Mr Snobelen:** Our program will be designed around making sure that people can repay their fair share of the cost in a way that's responsible for their circumstances. That includes — and I'm proud of our moves over the course of the last two years — where we've asked colleges and universities to hold back 30% of any tuition fee increase to help students most in need. We're introducing the Ontario student trust fund — \$500 million to help the students most in need in Ontario. I could go on about innovative program after innovative program intended and directed at those students most in need in Ontario, including spending more year over year on OSAP, on assistance for students.

As we begin, step by step, to build a better program for supporting students in Ontario, I can tell you that it's very difficult some days in this chamber to hear from the Leader of the Opposition about the support for these students when he said there are too many programs being

offered at too many universities which could be better offered on a more efficient, cost-effective basis at —

**The Speaker:** New question.

### ONTARIO HYDRO

**Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River):** In the absence of the Minister of Energy and of the Premier, I'll put this question to the Minister of Finance. Minister, today I released a proposal for an independent commission into the situation at Ontario Hydro. Since Hydro released its so-called plan a month ago, the costs of the plan have ballooned by more than \$1.5 billion. Governor Pataki of New York has said he is worried that Ontario will be dumping more pollution on New York state if you fire up the fossil plants, as Ontario Hydro proposes.

It is clear that the situation at Hydro is not under control. Minister, I know you wouldn't want the public to think that Hydro is squandering \$8.8 billion of their money and I know you wouldn't want them to think your government has a secret agenda of privatization. You say your government is serious about getting all the facts on the table about Hydro. Will you accept our proposal for a truly independent commission of inquiry?

**Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance):** It's my understanding that the Minister of Energy has sent to both opposition parties a proposal, which he is certainly willing to sit down and discuss, with respect to looking into the difficulties at Ontario Hydro. I don't think anybody disputes the fact that indeed there are some difficulties at Ontario Hydro. That has been acknowledged and recognized by everybody and I think everybody understands and agrees that the public has to be taken into account and we have to make sure we have an adequate supply of safe power in Ontario.

It's my understanding that the minister has sent a letter to the two opposition parties today and he's certainly willing to sit down and talk about these things.

**Mr Hampton:** The proposal from your Minister of Energy is for a very quick and dirty investigation by a committee that will be dominated by your backbenchers. With all respect, Minister, people across this province have seen what happens in those committees. In the committee dealing with the megacity, anybody who came forward and disagreed with your government was either ridiculed or ignored by government members on the committee. With respect to workers' compensation, some of your backbenchers have literally shown contempt for the very injured workers who are going to be hurt by the legislation.

People want the facts to emerge. People want the serious issues that surround Hydro to be dealt with in a serious way, not by some quick and dirty government committee that already has an agenda.

Minister, that's the proposal we put to you. There are very serious issues at Hydro. Those very serious issues ought to be reviewed by an independent commission of inquiry that has the capacity to do its own research and the

capacity to demand answers to the tough questions. Will you do that?

**Hon Mr Eves:** First of all, it's my understanding that the minister indeed has scheduled a meeting with one of his opposition critics for tomorrow. I might note that the official opposition has taken a slightly different tack on this than the third party has. If I might say so, I wouldn't want to cast any aspersions on the official opposition getting a compliment from me, but I think the committee process is perhaps the most appropriate one in which to look at this.

However, I would like to go on and say that I have had an opportunity to peruse some of the principles in a press release put out by the New Democratic Party and by Mr Hampton, the leader of the New Democratic Party — Power for the People, it's called — and a statement of principles. Many of the principles that are outlined in your communiqué are the same principles that the Minister of Energy indicates in his letter that he is prepared to look at.

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Answer, please.

**Hon Mr Eves:** I think the facts are out there, and enough consensus that perhaps —

**The Speaker:** Thank you. Final supplementary.

**Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt):** I have just for the first time seen the proposed terms of reference from the Minister of Energy. While I don't disagree with a lot of the suggested terms of reference, there is no mention whatsoever about the whole issue of privatization of Hydro or parts of Ontario Hydro.

I think that is what is bothering us about the investigation going to an all-party committee which will be dominated by Tory backbenchers. We know what the intent of the government is on privatization and where your backbenchers will come down: They'll come down four-square on the side of privatization. That is why we want to have included in the terms of reference the whole issue of privatization, and I don't see it in this set of terms of reference. That is why we are calling for an independent inquiry that would be able to look into that in a much more objective-minded way than your backbenchers will ever do. That is why we are asking you now: Will you appoint an independent inquiry?

**Hon Mr Eves:** The issue of Ontario Hydro and difficulties with Ontario Hydro, as anybody who has been in this place is quite aware, and I'm sure the member is quite aware, has been around for many years, many decades. It certainly transcends all three political parties in this Legislature.

I would agree that we need to balance the needs of the public with timely decision-making that will ensure a power supply that is safe and secure for the future of Ontario. I would think those would be the most primary things we would want to have a committee of the Legislature look at, and I think they can look at that.

The minister will be releasing shortly his white paper on Ontario Hydro in a response to the Macdonald commission's report, and I'm sure that context will be there for any Legislative Assembly committee at the time those deliberations take place.

Calls for public inquiry get a little exaggerated from time to time. I have here a list of some 19 different times that the opposition parties in this Legislature have asked for public inquiries. They want a public inquiry almost every second week. I think we should —

**The Speaker:** Thank you, Minister of Finance.

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## ONTARIO LABOUR RELATIONS BOARD

**Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River):** To the Minister of Labour: It seems like every day now a court in Ontario has bad news for the Harris government and good news for all the people of Ontario. Yesterday the court ruled that this government's attempt to take away pay equity money from the lowest-paid women in the province was unconstitutional.

Today I want to talk about another court case. This one involves charges of contempt of the Ontario Labour Relations Board after Management Board Chair Dave Johnson was quoted as saying, "There would be a shake-up if the labour board decisions went against the government." Unbelievably you, the Minister of Labour, have fought tooth and nail to prevent the appointment of an independent person to hear the case against the Chair of Management Board. Now you have lost that court case too. The judge has issued an order saying that if you won't appoint an independent adjudicator, he will.

Minister, I want to ask you the same question I asked yesterday: Are you finally willing to listen to people and, most of all, listen to the courts?

**Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Labour):** I am well aware of the court's decision in the SEIU matter. I think you probably had some of the information a little different from what has been stated. But I will tell you I am very pleased that the court found the independence of the OLRB was not of issue. As I had indicated to the parties in my February 13, 1997, letter, they had possible remedies available to them in our court system and it would seem that those remedies are being pursued.

**Mr Hampton:** I invite any members of the public to get a copy of this court case, because the minister certainly has a sanitized version. Look, the court is ordering an independent adjudicator because the court is essentially finding that the Chair of Management Board has interfered.

I want to take you back to what this was all about: Your government took away the collective agreements of men and women who clean the office buildings at the Macdonald Block across the street. The allegations then expanded to include allegations that your government improperly fired labour board members, made partisan political appointments to that quasi-judicial tribunal and tried to intimidate the labour board into making decisions favouring your government. You were asked three times to appoint an independent adjudicator and you refused. Now the court has found that you were wrong.

Minister, I put the question to you: You have got all kinds of other labour cases. You are going to have some

issues arise out of Bill 136. Are you going to start listening to the people, and are you going to start listening to the courts, finally, in this province?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** I would simply indicate to you again that I am well aware of the court decision in this matter and that it would be inappropriate for me to comment further on the issue.

**Mr Hampton:** All the minister has to say is that she is going to start obeying the law, that she is going to start obeying the courts of Ontario.

While I'm at it, Minister, you can do something else. One of your hallmarks is that you made scabs legal again in this province. So we've got at S.A. Armstrong a scab situation; at Goldcorp in northwestern Ontario a scab situation; and now at PC World in Scarborough. You have given the signal to employers that they can treat workers with contempt. In fact, I would say you have led that whole stand.

The steelworkers have asked you to appoint a mediator at S.A. Armstrong. You refused to do that. Today the auto workers called on your government to intervene and to get good-faith bargaining started again to settle a bitter eight-month strike at PC World in Scarborough. I don't need to tell you that the labour board has already had some findings with respect to PC World.

Minister, are you going to do the right thing? Are you going to start listening to people and try to help these situations rather than making them worse?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Fortunately, we are listening to people; in fact we have created an environment within this province which has created 33,000 jobs in the last month. If you take a look at retail sales, they have increased 5%. If you take a look at car sales, housing sales, everywhere you look there is a tremendous optimism in this province, simply because we have listened to the people.

If you want to take a look at the issue of the PC World strike, I can indicate to you that, as a result of the meeting that took place this morning between the Deputy Minister of Labour and the president of PC World, we hope the parties will resume their negotiations to reach a settlement as soon as possible. We have had our mediators available.—

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Thank you very much. New question, official opposition.

## FINANCIAL STATEMENT

**Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew North):** My question is to the Minister of Finance. I have in my hand the public accounts which you released a few moments ago and, reading from page 19 of the volume concerning notes on financial statements, I see some concern raised by your officials at the Ministry of Finance about the Ontario government position vis-à-vis the Ontario Hydro debt guarantee.

According to your own documents tabled here just a few moments ago, the Ontario government has now guaranteed approximately \$29 billion worth of Hydro debt. According to your own document, and I read from

page 19, "The Ontario government's risk to make payments under the guarantees has been increased as a result of recent activities at Ontario Hydro."

Given this statement today, what has your government done, what has your department done, to assess this so-called recovery plan that the Hydrocrats are engaged in that seems to many outside observers to increase the exposure of the Ontario government?

**Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance):** To the honourable member, who always puts his questions so eloquently and so demanding: The bond rating agencies, you will know their initial response, of course, to the report coming out of Ontario Hydro. Moody's, CBRS and Standard and Poor's all indicate that they think the province is more than capable of handling any difficulties that may or may not come out of the Ontario Hydro report.

Officials at finance obviously are talking to individuals and officials at Ontario Hydro. It would not be appropriate for us to do otherwise, I would submit to you. We are certainly of the impression to date that Ontario Hydro will be able to meet any financial demands it has with its initial plan, I might say, that's out there for the public to see today.

**Mr Conway:** Your own report today raises the concern about an increased exposure and risk to the Ontario government and its taxpayers as a result of recent Hydro activities. My question is very clear. Has anyone in the Ontario government, most especially has anybody at treasury and finance, done an independent assessment about this so-called nuclear recovery program the dollars of which have changed by over \$1.5 billion in just three weeks? Has anybody looked at the Hydro plan, independent of Hydro, to come to some conclusions as to whether it's a good plan, the right plan, what options have been looked at and discarded, or are we just going let the Hydrocrats who got us all into this mess in the first place develop the recovery plan without anybody in finance or in the government, whose risk and exposure is pointed out today in the public accounts, doing an independent assessment in the name of the Hydro ratepayers and, more important, the Ontario taxpayers who are on the hook for all of this multibillion-dollar guarantee?

**Hon Mr Eves:** Obviously any time that there are additional debt problems created, if and when they are created for Ontario Hydro, the province of Ontario has increased exposure in that area. That goes without saying. Yes, finance officials are talking to people at Ontario Hydro, because the government wants to be satisfied that the appropriate plan of action is being taken and that indeed it's a workable plan. We talked earlier today; a question was asked by the leader of the third party about Ontario Hydro. We're going to have a legislative committee, hopefully, that will look at this entire issue.

I think these are all welcome suggestions and all very appropriate ones and I would share his concern, but I would not assume that because there may be some increased exposure to Ontario as a result of what Hydro is doing, we should go off half-cocked, so to speak. I think

we should approach this in a rational and appropriate fashion, and that's exactly what we are doing on this side of the House.

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## SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS

**M. Gilles Bisson (Cochrane-Sud) :** Ma question s'adresse au vice-premier ministre. Dès le début du processus Qui Fait Quoi, le Nouveau Parti démocratique et plusieurs francophones de la province ont soulevé des craintes que, avec le transfert des services provinciaux aux municipalités, les francophones iront perdre la protection de la Loi sur les services en français.

J'ai ici une lettre de votre secrétaire du Cabinet qui indique que vos propres ministères partagent nos craintes et celles des autres francophones. Laissez-moi lire une partie de cette lettre ; c'est une traduction parce que la lettre était écrite en anglais :

«Au cours des derniers mois, plusieurs ministères ont soulevé des questions quant à la disponibilité des services en français une fois que ces services seront transférés aux ministères.»

C'est clair que vos propres ministères s'inquiètent de ce qui va arriver quand les services seront transférés. Qu'allez-vous faire pour garantir que les services en français vont être protégés sous la loi ?

**Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance):** Mr Speaker, I would ask the honourable member to repeat the question. I do not have my earset in my desk. As a matter of fact, the set I borrowed is not working. So if he would be so kind as to repeat the question.

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** It's a fairly reasonable request, because mine isn't working either, for some reason.

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** I don't even need one.

**The Speaker:** Could you stop the clock, please. Maybe it would be helpful if the member for St Catharines could repeat it for us.

Do you want to ask it again?

**M. Bisson :** Ça indique sûrement, Monsieur le Président, que l'on a des problèmes quand ça en vient aux services en français ici dans la province. On va essayer une autre fois.

Dès le début du processus Qui Fait Quoi, le Nouveau Parti démocratique et plusieurs autres francophones de la province ont soulevé des craintes que, avec le transfert des services provinciaux aux municipalités, les francophones vont perdre la protection de la Loi sur les services en français quand ça en vient à ce transfert de services.

J'ai ici une lettre qu'on a reçue de votre secrétaire du Cabinet qui indique que vos propres ministères ont les mêmes craintes que notre parti. Je vais en lire une traduction :

«Au cours des derniers mois, plusieurs ministères ont soulevé la question quant à la disponibilité des services en français une fois que ces services seront transférés aux municipalités.»

Ma question à vous est simplement celle-ci. Il est clair que vos propres ministères s'inquiètent de ce qui va arriver aux services en français. Allez-vous nous assurer, une fois pour toutes, que les services en français vont être garantis par une protection législative quand vous allez transférer vos responsabilités provinciales aux municipalités ?

**Hon Mr Eves:** I will refer this question to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. I think it's a question dealing with providing French-language services via municipalities.

**Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing):** Should I ask him to repeat it?

**The Speaker:** Forget it. We're not repeating it again.

**Hon Mr Leach:** Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I appreciate the point that is being made by the member of the third party, because the ability of the citizens of Ontario to have services provided to them in the language of their choice, either French or English, is extremely important to this party, as it is to all members of this House. I can assure you that there won't be any actions taken by this government that will take services away from those citizens who presently receive them. We will ensure, on a program-by-program basis, that the delivery of services to francophones will be there as required.

**M. Bisson :** Je trouve ce processus-là à travers lequel on vient de passer un peu frustrant. Premièrement, on ne comprend pas la question. Deuxièmement, on la réfère à un ministre qui n'a même pas entendu la question. Quand même, vous avez essayé.

Au ministre des Affaires municipales, qui est chargé du processus Qui Fait Quoi, si on lit cette lettre de votre secrétaire du Cabinet, il y a une partie là-dedans qui me préoccupe et qui fait peur.

Je vais faire de mon mieux la traduction. La lettre est écrite par le secrétaire du Cabinet à tous les sous-ministres adjoints de votre gouvernement. Ça dit, «Le gouvernement a récemment décidé» — ça veut dire que le Cabinet de l'Ontario a décidé — «que les prestations des services en français dans le cadre du transfert des services aux municipalités devraient être déterminées programme par programme, et selon les garantis de la Loi 8.»

Monsieur le Ministre, nous vous demandons encore : vous avez une responsabilité, comme le gouvernement, de vous assurer que les services en français vont être garantis quand vous allez transférer les services aux municipalités. Allez-vous être capable de nous garantir sous la Loi 8 par un changement législatif ces protections ?

**Hon Mr Leach:** Again to my good friend in the third party, as I stated, one of the reasons for some of those pieces of correspondence is that every ministry and every department of this government wants to ensure that French-language service is protected. That's why those pieces of correspondence go from ministry to ministry, to make sure that each ministry is prepared to provide services to francophones in their native language. We are going to ensure on a program-by-program basis that the services required by francophones in Ontario are there for them as they are now.

## PUBLIC SERVICE AND LABOUR RELATIONS REFORM

**Mr Frank Klees (York-Mackenzie):** My question is to the Minister of Labour and it concerns this government's ongoing consultation around Bill 136.

Members of this House will be aware of the recent consultations between the Minister of Labour, the Premier and other ministers with the Ontario Federation of Labour. Members of this House will also know that the government is currently considering the various recommendations made by the OFL. It's clear that the minister and this government are continuing to listen to receive input on Bill 136.

I wonder if the minister could elaborate for us on other areas of consultation around this bill to give us some further sense of the government's consultation.

**Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Labour):** Yes, we are consulting and have consulted with the OFL. In fact, today my ministry staff continued to engage in consultations with the OFL. It was as a result of the input we had received from the labour leaders prior to the introduction of the bill that we did not include the successor right provisions and the restrictions on contracting out.

We've also met with AMO, we have met with the health and hospital organizations, we will be meeting with ONA and we have been consulting with the police as well. So we are having widespread consultation on Bill 136. I'm quite confident that at the end of the day we will be able to look at some alternative suggestions.

**Mr Klees:** I wonder if the minister could elaborate for us and give us some specifics as to the outcome of this consultation and listening process so far.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** The results of the consultation, including the consultation today, have been very positive. We have heard from the Toronto transition team, who have written to us to say, "Bill 136 is an essential element in the objective of a smooth transition to the new city of Toronto." The president of AMO said in his speech, "AMO remains committed to the principles it originally espoused and are found in Bill 136"; and Hazel McCallion, the mayor of Mississauga, has written to us and she has indicated in her letter, "I was greatly disappointed in the way Bill 136 was considered and voted on at the conference," meaning the AMO conference. "I am pleased that you are not going to withdraw the bill. You are correct that AMO has, over the years, asked for more control, especially regarding arbitration."

We are consulting, we are listening and we want to ensure that all employees receive fair treatment.

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## HEALTH INSURANCE

**Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South):** I have a question for the Minister of Health. Last week I talked to you about an individual who has been waiting since last April for an MRI at Sunnybrook hospital. His doctor called again last week and found out he is still going to be wait-

ing a couple of more months. Last Thursday Ed Sprague, who plays for the Blue Jays, injured his shoulder. He got an MRI in a Toronto hospital the next day.

There's something wrong with this scenario, and it's your scenario: the idea that MRI services can only provide 40 hours a week through OHIP and then rent their services out to private insurance companies in order to make up the costs. We're finding out that in one Ontario hospital they're operating for 90 hours and only 40 hours of that is for OHIP; the rest is for private insurance and WCB.

Is it not a violation of the Ontario Health Insurance Act to charge directly to sell insurance for a cost of a medically necessary service? If that's the case, what are you doing about it?

**Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health):** No. In the history of OHIP, it's never been against the rules that once the publicly funded system has paid for the hours, then hospitals are free to use the equipment for private services — insurance services only. Individuals can't come in off the street; that's a violation of the act.

The act has been challenged many times. The federal government, including the current Liberal government, has clarified this area, and nothing has changed over the past several decades.

It's not uncommon, for example, that much of the workers' compensation work, which is an insurance company, is done after the OHIP work. It's simply a matter of the availability of times. These are decisions taken by the hospital. They are not taken by the Ministry of Health, and they never have been taken by the Ministry of Health nor the Minister of Health.

**Mr Kennedy:** There's no denying that this practice is taking place. It's supposed to be for very limited purposes, but nobody is checking on that, and from what you just said, you're not even concerned about it.

If you've got a private insurance company and you can pay for it, you get an MRI in days, maybe a few weeks. If you're a taxpayer in Ontario, expecting quality health services through your government, you wait for months. This isn't acceptable.

The hospitals have told us that you're only paying \$150,000 of the upkeep for those machines. It doesn't even cover the service contract. They've got to rent out their machines, they have to do this, because you won't give them enough money to provide MRI services to the public. You have created the lineups. You are the one making this accountant who's got back pain, who can't walk, who is 53 years old — he doesn't get the service, but Ed Sprague does.

We've heard how unconcerned you are and we want to know: Are you sponsoring this development of a two-tier system in Ontario for MRIs? You say the Ontario Health Insurance Act isn't violated. I would say to you that the Canada Health Act is being violated. I would like you stand up and tell us what you're going to do about it,

**Hon Mr Wilson:** It's a ridiculous assertion. If the member has any doubts about my answers, he can ask the federal Liberal Minister of Health.

Second, I'm proud to say that the federal government has made clear in the two years I've been health minister that we're the only province in which they have no complaints about the way we uphold the Canada Health Act. We have no irritants between us and Ottawa with respect to upholding the Canada Health Act.

Third, I don't like the system we inherited from you and the NDP either, and that's why we're adding 23 more MRIs so people can have access to modern technology that's long-overdue in our health care system. We're acting where you failed to act.

Go talk to the feds. Tell them to give back our \$2 billion. And stop standing in our way of restructuring, because we need to get these MRIs up and running for the patients of Ontario.

### GASOLINE PRICES

**Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie):** My question is for the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations. Tomorrow is the start of the federal-provincial consumer ministers' conference in Regina. You introduced a resolution in this House almost two weeks ago, but while it was debated last week, there was no vote.

You can blame the Liberals for that all you want, but you're the government in Ontario and the government has not put the resolution on gas pricing on today's agenda. Minister, will you put the resolution on the House agenda today so that you won't be going to Regina empty-handed tomorrow?

**Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations):** Earlier last week we heard a lot of rhetoric from the opposition parties indicating a clear support for the resolution. To the credit of the third party, they were very supportive of the fact that we need to go to Saskatchewan. They understand how important this is to the people of Ontario.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Order. Minister.

**Hon Mr Tsubouchi:** As I was saying, at least the members of the New Democratic Party understand how important this issue is to the people of the province and they are willing to carry through on their commitment to protect the people of Ontario.

I can understand where the Liberals are coming from. I guess they want to protect their cousins in Ottawa. They don't want to somehow bother their federal counterparts and they put that political agenda ahead of the agenda of the people of Ontario.

We have a commitment. It is on the agenda to speak to at the conference. I will carry forward the fact that most of the House supports the resolution, and certainly we'll try to do everything we can to protect the people of Ontario from high and outrageous gas prices.

**Mr Martin:** Where's the beef, Minister? Ontario consumers continue to be gouged. Gas prices in southern Ontario range from the high 50s to the low 60s. Northern Ontario consumers are gouged twice. Wawa's gas prices

continue at 72.9 cents a litre. Other gas prices in northern Ontario hover around 65.9 cents a litre or higher. Gas prices in border towns like Windsor and Welland and Fort Frances and my own community of Sault Ste Marie are sending people across the border to the United States of America. They are not just buying gas; consumers are making other purchases.

Yes, the federal government is equipped to deal with this in the Competition Act and the standing commission which looks into competition policy. Minister, the NDP caucus will support the gas pricing resolution, but will you resolve to take some action yourself, check out Prince Edward Island's Petroleum Products Act, and to alleviate the double whammy on northerners, will you eliminate the \$37 motor vehicle registration fee which you reintroduced?

**Hon Mr Tsubouchi:** I don't believe it's a question of looking for where the beef is. Perhaps I can look across at the opposition party and see the results of one end of the beef in terms of the gas prices and the gas situation.

*Interjection.*

**Hon Mr Tsubouchi:** At least you guys got it.

*Interjections.*

1500

**Hon Mr Tsubouchi:** It's a relief to be able to get up and speak now after that cacophony of flatulence over there. Clearly we have a commitment to try to protect the consumers of Ontario.

*Interjection.*

**Hon Mr Tsubouchi:** Perhaps you can pass the dictionary over there to the member for St Catharines so he understands that.

We have a commitment to act for the consumer in Ontario. It is being tabled at the ministers' conference. Certainly I will take the support of the House there.

I would like to just mention one thing. We had an opportunity to pass a resolution earlier on, and once again I must point out that the NDP support the resolution. If I could just say what Mr Hampton, the leader of the third party, said: "I've listened intently to the speakers who addressed this issue" — speaking to the Liberal Party — "and so far I'm a bit perplexed. I've listened to a number of Liberal representatives. I'm not sure if they're supporting the resolution or not supporting the resolution." Gee, what a change.

## DOMESTIC COURTS

**Mr Bob Wood (London South):** My question is to the Attorney General. The minister recently announced the expansion of specialized domestic courts to six new sites across Ontario, one of which is in London. When does the minister expect these new courts to be operational?

**Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs):** In London we are setting up a court modelled on the Toronto K court experience. The court is made up of a designated team of crown attorneys, police and victim support staff with expertise in training in domestic assault cases. Before selecting and

scheduling cases, the new crown attorneys, courtrooms and batterers' programs must all be in place. We are presently working with all parties, including the police, to complete these steps, and with the minister responsible for women's issues, Dianne Cunningham.

The court will be operational in December 1997. At that time, the court will begin selecting and scheduling cases for hearing. Based on the success of our pilot projects that are already running in Metropolitan Toronto, I'm hopeful that all six new courts will help to further combat the problem of domestic violence, while supporting victims of this crime before, during and after the court process.

**Mr Bob Wood:** In what concrete ways does the minister expect these new courts to make the system work better?

**Hon Mr Harnick:** To date we have taken a look at the concrete ways in the city of Toronto in the K court where prosecutors are unanimous that they are obtaining more convictions in cases where previously their only evidence was the victim's testimony. The new court uses additional evidence such as 911 tapes, photos of the crime scene and the victim's injuries, as well as audio-video recordings of the victim's statement to police, which has reduced the pressure on victims to testify in court.

In North York we have a court that's designed to break the cycle of abuse through early intensive intervention with first-time offenders where there has been no physical injury. One hundred and seventy-nine cases have been deemed eligible for this project; 107 of the 179 accused have entered counselling programs to change their behaviour and prevent future violence. That is why the minister responsible for women's issues, Dianne Cunningham, has invested \$5.2 million over the next four years into opening six new specialized domestic violence courts, something that neither of the opposition parties ever deemed to be important.

## LOTTERY MACHINES

**Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South):** My question is for the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations. There are 700 instant ticket vending machines in the province of Ontario, machines that dispense scratch-and-win tickets. Currently there are no enforcement controls in place to oversee the sale of these tickets. They're available in doughnut shops, laundromats, bowling alleys, all over the place. This summer, a 14-year-old boy visited four of these establishments and was able to buy four scratch-and-win lottery tickets.

Minister, you have in your ministry and the Ontario Lottery Corp the authority to withdraw these machines in the province of Ontario. Will you do that?

**Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations):** I refer the question to the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism.

**Hon William Saunderson (Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism):** We share the concerns when under-age people use these machines. There

were concerns given to us over the last few months, and I have asked the Ontario Lottery Corp to delve into any abuses by the people who run the vending machines which allow young people to use these machines.

The member has a very good point. I think we're all concerned that under-age people should be using these machines. I will continue to refer these situations to the lottery corporation for investigation.

**Mr Crozier:** You just don't understand. A referral to the lottery corporation isn't enough. They can't control them. There are four tickets there that prove that.

If you really care whether we stop children from gambling in the province, you'll do like the previous government did with cigarette vending machines and you'll get rid of them. That's the way to solve the problem. Why don't you stand up today and say, "I don't like children gambling in the province of Ontario and I'm going to get rid of these machines"?

**Hon Mr Saunderson:** I think I made it very clear that I did not think it was right that young people use these machines. But I would like to say that our policy with the lottery corporation is to remove these lottery ticket vending machines from those retail outlets that are selling to under-age people. We have done this in the past and we will do it again. I'm glad you brought the point to me. I'd ask you if you could tell me what location it was where this happened and be specific.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Order.

**Hon Mr Saunderson:** I'd like to say to the member from the opposition that the people who sell to minors can be fined up to \$50,000 and corporations can be fined up to \$250,000. If I could ask him for his cooperation, to give me the details of the situation, I would be glad to investigate it and report back to him.

#### FAMILY RESPONSIBILITY OFFICE

**Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East):** I have a question for the Attorney General regarding the family support plan. It has been a year since you closed the regional offices of the family support plan and laid off 290 staff, and there has been no improvement whatsoever for women and children who are trying to get money they're entitled to. Every day our constituency offices —

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Member for Etobicoke-Rexdale, you must withdraw that statement. That's out of order.

**Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke-Rexdale):** I'll withdraw it, Speaker.

*Laughter.*

**Ms Martel:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. I appreciate that some people don't think this is a serious issue.

Every day women and children continue to call our constituency offices because they can't get through on the 1-800 line, they get no replies to their faxes or letters, and cheques continue to be lost or delayed for no good reason whatsoever.

We want to raise with you today the case of Lorna Bell, who we've been trying to help since April of this year. She is in arrears right now of \$3,167.49. She has received support payments for 15 years and had no problem with her payments until you closed the Windsor office. The last contact we had with family support on August 6 was for the family support plan to offer to call Chrysler and find out where her money has gone. We haven't heard from anyone since. Can you tell me why Lorna Bell and her son can't get the money they are entitled to?

**Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs):** I will certainly take a look at the information the member has provided today and see if we can find an answer. I reiterate that there are a number of variables as to why money doesn't find its way into the hands of the recipient. Sometimes the payor is no longer working. Sometimes there are court orders that involve some work to be done. I don't know the answer, but we will look into that.

I know the member doesn't want to admit that the plan has gotten better. The fact is that 95% of money is processed within 24 to 48 hours. It's done by the Royal Bank. It's done through modern technology. Last month, \$37.5 million was distributed by the Family Responsibility Office, and that is a significant improvement over anything this plan was ever able to do in the past.

1510

**The Speaker:** Supplementary?

**Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold):** Lorna Bell's problems didn't begin until this Attorney General dismantled the family support plan across the province. Just like Victoria Adam and her two kids, who first made contact with our caucus in March 1997. She simply couldn't get through to the Attorney General's new FSP consolidated up in Downsview. In fact, the 1-800 number that the Attorney General published seems to be accessible to nobody any longer; all one gets is voice mail. The special number for constituency offices — because you see, family support remains the number one problem that our constituency offices remain confronted by — the special so-called access line for MPPs has been cut off as well.

Victoria Adam is owed almost \$1,300 by this Attorney General. Her problems began with his dismantling of the family support plan. Where's her money? How come you can't get your act together? How come neither these people nor constituency offices can get through to your staff?

**Hon Mr Harnick:** We all know there are about 165,000 people who are recipients of money through the Family Responsibility Office. This has been the case for many, many years. We also know that for many, many years payments didn't flow simply and easily through what was the former family support plan. We also know that today a greater percentage of phone calls are being returned and answered and problems solved in a one-step process than has ever been the case before.

We also know that as a result of closing regional offices, we found 90,000 backlogged items: 90,000 people who didn't have their cost-of-living allowance applied,

90,000 people who didn't have their mail answered. We are now eating into that backlog. That backlog should be gone by late October. The plan has made tremendous advances beyond anywhere that the plan ever existed. I say to the people who ask these questions to take a look at their facts and realize how terrible this plan was before and how improved it is today.

## PETITIONS

### MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

**Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury):** This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and is entitled "Let the People Decide."

"Whereas Bill 156 was introduced as a private member's bill and is entitled the Regional Municipality of Sudbury Statute Law Amendment Act, 1997; and

"Whereas this bill provides for the direct election of the chair of the regional municipality of Sudbury by a vote of the electors in the area municipalities; and

"Whereas the election of the regional chair will be held concurrently with the regular election in the area municipalities; and

"Whereas we, the electorate of the regional municipality of Sudbury, want to be part of the electoral process in electing a regional chair; and

"Whereas we, the electorate, believe that as residents of the area municipalities composing the regional municipality of Sudbury we have a right to decide who is elected to the office of regional chair; and

"Whereas we, the electorate, support Rick Bartolucci's private member's bill which lets the people decide;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support the private member's bill entitled the Regional Municipality of Sudbury Statute Law Amendment Act, which will provide the taxpayers of the regional municipality of Sudbury with a voice in electing our regional chair, and urge the assembly to deal with this private member's bill immediately."

I affix my signature to the petition.

### MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

**Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma):** I have a petition signed by 170 residents, mainly of the Ottawa area, addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, regarding the government's download to municipalities. The petitioners are raising objections to the download of the cost of transportation, social services, public health and the removal of school boards' ability to tax, the government's lack of consultation with those affected, and as a result, the petitioners are stating that they are registering a vote of non-confidence in this government.

I affix my signature to it.

## COURT DECISION

**Mr Bob Wood (London South):** I have a petition signed by 124 people. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the courts have ruled that women have the lawful right to go topless in public; and

"Whereas the Liberal government of Canada has the power to change the Criminal Code to reinstate such public nudity as an offence;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the government of Ontario to pass a bill empowering municipalities to enact bylaws governing dress code and to continue to urge the government of Canada to pass legislation to reinstate such partial nudity as an offence."

## HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

**Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William):** I have a petition to the Legislature of Ontario.

"Whereas the undersigned residents living in the city of Thunder Bay in northwestern Ontario are in need of a new regional acute care hospital situated in the city of Thunder Bay to provide the said residents with quality health care services in a modern and up-to-date acute care hospital; and

"Whereas the partial renovation and restructuring of the existing Port Arthur General Hospital, a 65-year-old outdated and antiquated hospital building, proposed by the Health Services Review Commission and the Minister of Health for the province of Ontario will not be suitable, adequate or proper to provide such quality health care services to the said residents; and

"Whereas the undersigned residents endorse and support the Thunder Bay Regional Hospital and the trustees of the hospital board and their vision of a new centrally located hospital to serve the northwestern Ontario region;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario to reverse the decision and direction of the health services review commission and the Minister of Health to have all acute care services for the city of Thunder Bay and northwestern Ontario region delivered from the renovated and restructured site of Port Arthur General Hospital and to endorse and approve capital funding to build a new centrally located acute care hospital in the city of Thunder Bay."

Once again, several hundred residents have signed this petition, and I affix my signature.

## TVONTARIO

**Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt):** To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas TVOntario provides Ontarians of all ages with programming that broadens understanding and responds to specific learning needs;

"Whereas TVOntario does this through formal and informal educational programming on its two networks,

TVO and TFO, which are available to 97% of households; and

"Whereas for over 26 years TVOntario has encouraged Ontarians to acquire new skills, advance their knowledge and pursue the benefits of lifelong learning through its educational programming; and

"Whereas without government support, programming which educates the viewer would not have the commercial appeal to survive;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to stop the privatization of TVOntario."

I have affixed my signature to it as well.

### COURT DECISION

**Mr Tony Clement (Brampton South):** I have a petition relating to the issue of toplessness, courtesy of the Kennedy Road Tabernacle and the Bramalea Baptist Church.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario Court of Appeal has ruled that women have the lawful right to appear topless in public; and

"Whereas the Liberal government of Canada has the power to change the Criminal Code to reinstate such public nudity as an offence;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the government of Ontario to continue to urge the government of Canada to pass legislation to ban going topless in public places."

I affix my signature yet again.

1520

### AGRICULTURAL FUNDING

**Mr John C. Cleary (Cornwall):** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas in the election campaign of June 1995, the agriculture policy put forth in the Common Sense Revolution assured residents of this province there would be no further cuts to the Ministry of Agriculture; and

"Whereas the current Minister of Agriculture repeatedly stated during the said election campaign that a Mike Harris government would not cut but increase spending to agriculture; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government has indeed cut agriculture spending by \$80 million and is now proceeding with an additional \$60-million cut over the next two years;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To cease the program of cuts to the Ministry of Agriculture, to increase funding in this ministry to an appropriate level and ensure the existence of the Ministry of Agriculture for the years to come."

I also sign the petition.

### BLOOD SYSTEM

**Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre):** I have a petition from a number of citizens of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, draw your attention to the following:

"That over 70% of persons with haemophilia were infected with hepatitis C through the use of blood-derived treatment products. With hepatitis C as with HIV, the same institutional players of the blood system failed to respond to the identified risk of transmission, failed to properly notify people of the potential risk of exposure, failed to implement safety measures to lessen the risk of transmission, that is, the failure of the Red Cross to implement surrogate testing for hepatitis C for over four years, and now continue to deny any responsibility for these failures.

"That the representatives of Hemophilia Ontario and its hepatitis C task force have been advocating for financial compensation to those individuals who have been infected with hepatitis C through the Canadian blood system. The provincial Minister of Health, Jim Wilson, has three times cancelled meetings with Hemophilia Ontario, and the provincial and territorial ministers of health have publicly stated that they intend to keep the issue of hepatitis C compensation off their agenda in future meetings; and

"Further, that the only prescribed treatment for hepatitis C in Ontario is alpha interferon, which has a less than 25% success rate in clearing the virus among people who have had one exposure to the virus. Many haemophiliacs were repeatedly exposed to the hepatitis C virus through the use of blood-derived treatment products. The response to interferon therapy in haemophiliacs with chronic HCV infection is poor and appears inferior to that of other groups of infected patients. In view of the generally poor response to interferon therapy in haemophiliacs, treatment with interferon is inappropriate in the majority of individuals, as quoted in Blood magazine, volume 87, number 5, March 1996.

"Therefore, your petitioners call upon you to meet with representatives of Hemophilia Ontario's hepatitis C task force now to discuss issues related to compensation."

### CHARITABLE GAMING

**Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton):** I have a petition signed by approximately 100 constituents from the riding of Lambton. It states:

"Professing that our world belongs to God and believing that governments are called to secure justice for all, with prejudice towards none and with compassion for the weak and powerless;

"We, the undersigned, urge you, our member of provincial Parliament, to oppose and resist the spread of gambling into our area. Specifically, we ask you to resist all efforts to install video lottery terminals here and oppose the operation of local or regional charity casinos."

## HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

**Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South):** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Northwestern hospital provides quality health care to the residents of northwest Toronto; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario and the board of Humber River regional hospital are planning to close Northwestern hospital as early as September 1997; and

"Whereas adequate replacement services are not available and the care of all residents in northwest Metro will be in jeopardy; and

"Whereas there have already been cases of risk to patients due to the rush to close Northwestern this summer;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to guarantee no shutdown of services at Northwestern occurs until replacement services are available, and further to review the quality of health services which will be available to the whole northwest area."

I have several hundred local residents who have signed this petition. I add my signature to theirs.

## LONG-TERM CARE

**Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre):** I have a petition to the Honourable Lieutenant Governor and the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the provincial government is abandoning its responsibility to provide good care for people who live in long-term-care facilities by defunding and deregulating the sector; and

"Whereas the resulting staffing shortages lead to loss of quality care, decreased resident security and more workplace injuries; and

"Whereas the selloff to for-profit operators of the care for our frail, elderly residents raises questions about accountability, accessibility, working conditions and quality of care and pits frail residents against robust profits; and

"Whereas the provincial government has a responsibility to ensure that funding, staffing and standards provide a level of care which promotes dignity and respect for those who live and work in long-term-care facilities;

"We, the following undersigned citizens of Ontario, beg leave to petition the Parliament of Ontario to provide adequate funding for the care of residents in long-term-care facilities, to establish and enforce provincial standards for care in Ontario long-term-care facilities and to impose a moratorium on the selloff of care for vulnerable residents to the for-profit sector."

I agree with this petition and I'm proud to affix my signature.

## CHILD CARE

**Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel):** I have a petition to the Legislature of Ontario.

"We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, draw the attention of the Legislature of Ontario to the following:

"That managing the family home and caring for infant and preschool children is an honourable profession which has not been recognized for its value to our society and deserves respect and support;

"That child care policies and funding should provide equity and fairness to all Ontario families;

"Therefore, your petitioners call upon the Legislature to (a) pursue policy and funding initiatives that will support a full range of child care choices, such as extending the child care tax credit to all families, including those providing full-time parental care, and to (b) pursue discussions with the federal government to review the tax system to find ways to assist two-parent families where one parent chooses to remain at home."

I have signed this petition.

## RENT REGULATION

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** I have a petition which reads as follows:

"Whereas the Mike Harris government has brought forth Bill 96, legislation which will effectively kill rent control in the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris campaign literature during the York South by-election stated that 'rent control will continue'; and

"Whereas tenant groups, students and seniors have pointed out that this legislation will hurt those that can least afford it, as it will cause higher rents across most markets in Ontario; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris proposal will make it easier for residents to be evicted from retirement care homes; and

"Whereas the Liberal caucus continues to believe that all tenants, and particularly the vulnerable in our society who live on fixed incomes, deserve the assurance of a maximum rent cap;

"We, the undersigned, demand that the Mike Harris government scrap its proposal to abandon and eliminate rent control and to introduce legislation which will protect tenants in the province of Ontario."

I affix my signature as I'm in total and complete agreement with the sentiments expressed in this petition.

## HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

**Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre):** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas over half the people in Ontario are women;

"Only 5% of the money spent on medical research goes to research in women's health;

"Women have special medical needs since their bodies are not the same as men's;

"Women's College is the only hospital in Ontario with a primary mandate giving priority to research and treatment dedicated to women's health needs;

"The World Health Organization has named Women's College Hospital as the sole collaborating centre for women's health for both North and South America;

"Without Women's College Hospital, the women of Ontario and of the world will lose a health resource that will not be duplicated elsewhere;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to ensure the continuance, independence, woman-centred focus and accessible downtown location of the one hospital most crucial to the future of women's health care."

I am proud to affix my signature as I am in agreement with the petition.

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### SOCIAL ASSISTANCE REFORM ACT, 1997

#### LOI DE 1997

#### SUR LA RÉFORME DE L'AIDE SOCIALE

Resuming the adjourned debate on the motion for second reading of Bill 142, An Act to revise the law related to Social Assistance by enacting the Ontario Works Act and the Ontario Disability Support Program Act, by repealing the Family Benefits Act, the Vocational Rehabilitation Services Act and the General Welfare Assistance Act and by amending several other Statutes / Projet de loi 142, Loi révisant la loi relative à l'aide sociale en édictant la Loi sur le programme Ontario au travail et la Loi sur le Programme ontarien de soutien aux personnes handicapées, en abrogeant la Loi sur les prestations familiales, la Loi sur les services de réadaptation professionnelle et la Loi sur l'aide sociale générale et en modifiant plusieurs autres lois.

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Pursuant to the order of the House dated September 4, 1997, I am now required to put the question.

Mrs Ecker has moved second reading of Bill 142. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? No?

All those in favour please say "aye."

All those opposed please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. There will be a five-minute bell.

*The division bells rang from 1530 to 1535.*

**The Speaker:** All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

#### Ayes

Baird, John R.	Hastings, John	Palladini, Al
Beaubien, Marcel	Hodgson, Chris	Parker, John L.
Boushy, Dave	Hudak, Tim	Pettit, Trevor
Brown, Jim	Jackson, Cameron	Preston, Peter
Carr, Gary	Johns, Helen	Rollins, E.J. Douglas
Chudleigh, Ted	Johnson, Bert	Ross, Lillian
Clement, Tony	Johnson, David	Runciman, Robert W.
Cunningham, Dianne	Johnson, Ron	Saunderson, William
Danford, Harry	Jordan, W. Leo	Shea, Derwyn
DeFaria, Carl	Kells, Morley	Sheehan, Frank
Doyle, Ed	Klees, Frank	Smith, Bruce
Ecker, Janet	Leach, Al	Spina, Joseph
Eves, Ernie L.	Leadston, Gary L.	Stewart, R. Gary
Fisher, Barbara	Marland, Margaret	Tilson, David

Ford, Douglas B.  
Fox, Gary  
Froese, Tom  
Galt, Doug  
Gilchrist, Steve  
Grimmett, Bill  
Guzzo, Gary J.  
Hamick, Charles

Martiniuk, Gerry  
Maves, Bart  
McLean, Allan K.  
Murdoch, Bill  
Mushinski, Marilyn  
Newman, Dan  
O'Toole, John  
Ouellette, Jerry J.

Tsubouchi, David H.  
Turnbull, David  
Wettlaufer, Wayne  
Wilson, Jim  
Witmer, Elizabeth  
Wood, Bob  
Young, Terence H.

**The Speaker:** All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

#### Nays

Agostino, Dominic  
Bartolucci, Rick  
Bisson, Gilles  
Boyd, Marion  
Bradley, James J.  
Brown, Michael A.  
Castrilli, Annamaria  
Churley, Marilyn  
Cleary, John C.

Conway, Sean G.  
Gerretsen, John  
Grandmaitre, Bernard  
Gravelle, Michael  
Kormos, Peter  
Laughren, Floyd  
Marchese, Rosario  
Martel, Shelley  
Martin, Tony

McLeod, Lyn  
Morin, Gilles E.  
Patten, Richard  
Phillips, Gerry  
Pupatello, Sandra  
Ruprecht, Tony  
Silipo, Tony  
Wood, Len

**Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers):** The ayes are 65; the nays are 26.

**The Speaker:** I declare the motion carried. Pursuant to the order of the House dated September 4, 1997, the bill is ordered referred to the standing committee on social development.

### CITY OF TORONTO ACT, 1997 (No. 2)

#### LOI DE 1997

#### SUR LA CITÉ DE TORONTO (N<sup>o</sup> 2)

Resuming the adjourned debate on the motion for second reading of Bill 148, An Act to deal with matters relating to the establishment of the new City of Toronto / Projet de loi 148, Loi traitant de questions se rapportant à la constitution de la nouvelle cité de Toronto.

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Pursuant to the order of the House dated September 8, 1997, I am now required to put the question.

Mr Leach has moved second reading of Bill 148. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

*The division bells rang from 1540 to 1545.*

**The Speaker:** All those in favour please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

#### Ayes

Baird, John R.  
Beaubien, Marcel  
Boushy, Dave  
Brown, Jim  
Carr, Gary  
Chudleigh, Ted  
Clement, Tony  
Cunningham, Dianne

Hamick, Charles  
Hastings, John  
Hodgson, Chris  
Hudak, Tim  
Jackson, Cameron  
Johns, Helen  
Johnson, Bert  
Johnson, David

Ouellette, Jerry J.  
Palladini, Al  
Parker, John L.  
Pettit, Trevor  
Preston, Peter  
Rollins, E.J. Douglas  
Runciman, Robert W.  
Saunderson, William

Danford, Harry  
DeFaria, Carl  
Doyle, Ed  
Ecker, Janet  
Eves, Ernie L.  
Fisher, Barbara  
Flaherty, Jim  
Ford, Douglas B.  
Fox, Gary  
Froese, Tom  
Galt, Doug  
Gilchrist, Steve  
Grimmett, Bill  
Guzzo, Garry J.

Johnson, Ron  
Jordan, W. Leo  
Kells, Morley  
Klees, Frank  
Leach, Al  
Leadston, Gary L.  
Marland, Margaret  
Martiniuk, Gerry  
Maves, Bart  
McLean, Allan K.  
Murdoch, Bill  
Mushinski, Marilyn  
Newman, Dan  
O'Toole, John

Shea, Derwyn  
Sheehan, Frank  
Smith, Bruce  
Spina, Joseph  
Stewart, R. Gary  
Tilson, David  
Tsubouchi, David H.  
Turnbull, David  
Wettlaufer, Wayne  
Wilson, Jim  
Witmer, Elizabeth  
Wood, Bob  
Young, Terence H.

cessible sources of information in all its many forms. The best way to do this is to allow the communities served by those libraries to determine how their own public library resources should be used.

Last year, the Ministry of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation conducted consultations with the library community and the public. Officials from the ministry and I spoke with delegations of library associations and organizations, with members of library boards and municipal councils and, most important, with library users themselves.

This year, following second reading of this bill, the standing committee on general government held hearings in which my parliamentary assistant, Mr Derwyn Shea, participated on my behalf. In these consultations and hearings there was a strong consensus that library boards should be retained. The bill before you proposes to do just that.

The committee recommended other changes. The bill now provides that library boards have a minimum number of board members and that meetings of the library board be open to members of the public.

Library boards will ensure that the concerns of libraries will keep a high profile at the municipal level. They are an ideal way for citizens to become involved in the management of their local library's resources. A further opportunity for community participation in the governance of libraries will arise when each municipality debates its own bylaws on the makeup of its library boards.

In the hearings there was some discussion as to who should be eligible to be on library boards. Some presenters felt that a majority of citizens other than elected officials should be required by the bill. The advantages of having elected officials on the library board were noted by Tom Boyle, the chair of the Bruce County Public Library, who made the point that the presence of elected officials on library boards furthers the accountability of the board to the community. The standing committee adopted the position that municipalities should be free to constitute library boards as they see fit. This conclusion is reflected in the bill now before the House.

In the consultations there was also a strong consensus that core services of libraries continue to be offered free of charge. There would be no charge for access to libraries — anyone would be able to enter a library and use library-owned collections free of charge — there would be no charge to residents for borrowing books and other printed materials and there would be no charge for borrowing special-format materials for residents with disabilities.

During the hearings there was strong support for the network connecting Ontario's libraries. Through the Ontario library network, libraries communicate with each other to make interlibrary loans possible. Thanks to these systems of interconnectivity, small neighbourhood libraries have access to specialized collections held by much larger libraries on the other side of the city or on the other side of the province.

**The Speaker:** All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

#### Nays

Agostino, Dominic  
Bartolucci, Rick  
Bisson, Gilles  
Boyd, Marion  
Bradley, James J.  
Brown, Michael A.  
Castrilli, Annamaria  
Churley, Marilyn  
Cleary, John C.

Conway, Sean G.  
Crozier, Bruce  
Gerretsen, John  
Grandmaître, Bernard  
Gravelle, Michael  
Kormos, Peter  
Laughren, Floyd  
Marchese, Rosario  
Martel, Shelley

Martin, Tony  
McLeod, Lyn  
Morin, Gilles E.  
Patten, Richard  
Phillips, Gerry  
Pupatello, Sandra  
Ruprecht, Tony  
Silipo, Tony  
Wood, Len

**Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers):** The ayes are 65; the nays are 27.

**The Speaker:** I declare the motion carried. Pursuant to the order of the House dated September 8, 1997, this bill is ordered referred to the standing committee on general government.

### LOCAL CONTROL OF PUBLIC LIBRARIES ACT, 1997

#### LOI DE 1997 SUR LE CONTRÔLE LOCAL DES BIBLIOTHÈQUES PUBLIQUES

Mrs Mushinski moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 109, An Act to amend the Public Libraries Act to put authority, responsibility and accountability for providing and effectively managing local library services at the local level / Projet de loi 109, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les bibliothèques publiques de façon à situer à l'échelon local les pouvoirs, la responsabilité et l'obligation de rendre compte concernant la fourniture et la gestion efficace des services locaux de bibliothèque.

**Hon Marilyn Mushinski (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation):** Mr Speaker, I will be dividing my time this afternoon with the member for High Park-Swansea and the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale.

The Local Control of Public Libraries Act proposes to do exactly what its title suggests: put the responsibility and accountability for managing public libraries where it belongs, with the communities which are served by those libraries.

We are very proud of our libraries. This government wants to ensure that they will continue to serve the people of this province as repositories of books and as very ac-

The network is currently being enhanced to carry high-speed digital information in multimedia form and to connect to the Internet and other repositories of information throughout the province, the country, and indeed the world. Under the new library framework, the government would continue to fund this network for the benefit of all of Ontario's public libraries.

If Bill 109 is adopted, day-to-day responsibility for and control over library operations will clearly rest with the local government. The province will continue to use its resources to advance the Ontario library network, and the new library framework will protect the traditional role of our libraries while recognizing and advancing their position on the leading edge of the information revolution.

These times have been called the information age. We know very well how thoroughly we rely on access to information and the exchange of information just to function in everyday life. Our public libraries are the most accessible source of information in society today. The goal of our new library framework is to ensure that libraries remain accessible while serving the rapidly evolving needs of the communities they serve. I am pleased to recommend this bill to my colleagues in the House.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr Ted Chudleigh):** Further debate? Questions and comments?

**Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt):** She is splitting her time.

**The Acting Speaker:** Splitting the time, the member for High Park-Swansea.

**Mr Derwyn Shea (High Park-Swansea):** I am very pleased to follow up on the comments made by the distinguished minister, the Honourable Marilyn Mushinski. I remind all members of this House of the title of the bill before us today. It is the Local Control of Public Libraries Act. I remind us of that because that is extremely important throughout this debate. It proposes to do exactly what its title suggests: put the responsibility of accountability for managing local libraries where it belongs, with the communities which are served by those libraries. I ask us to remember that as we go through this debate. It puts the responsibility for governance of the libraries in the hands of those councils directly elected by the people.

I am confident that when passed by this assembly, this act will serve us well. Bill 109 would amend the Public Libraries Act to add the following purpose to the existing legislation:

"(1) To ensure public libraries continue to successfully provide for Ontarians' information needs;

"(2) To support Ontarians' requirements for access to educational, research and recreational materials in a knowledge-based society;

"(3) To allow Ontarians to benefit from access to local, provincial and global information through a province-wide public library network."

Surely those are three principles at which no one in this House would take umbrage.

This act would be the newest phase in the evolution of the relationship between the government and the province's public libraries. This is a relationship which, I

remind us, predates Confederation. It is a relationship which has evolved and changed with the times. The Local Control of Public Libraries Act, together with a new regulation under the Municipal Act, would provide a new framework for Ontario's public libraries. This new framework would result in more effective and simpler management of library services at the local level.

I ask you to mark these words. We believe that municipalities, which provide the majority of library funding, are in the best position to make the decisions which affect the delivery of local library service. Surely this is a fundamental principle in a democratic system. I find myself struggling — and I'll wait to hear with more than passing interest the arguments that will be posed by my distinguished colleague from Port Arthur in the Liberal Party opposition and from my distinguished colleagues in the NDP third party, who will try to tell this House why local government ought not to be trusted in the governance of local libraries. I look to hearing that.

1600

Our province-wide review of library services began, I remind us also, before Mr Crombie's Who Does What panel, and this proposed legislation and the new library framework are consistent with the principles of that report. I emphasize that the Who Does What panel brought forward this sort of recommendation for us to follow.

To safeguard the independence of libraries, I also remind us Bill 109 would continue to require that libraries be operated by library boards. I want to say at this point that's a point on which I was touched and persuaded by deputations during the public hearings. I think they were well made and I think the minister and the government have responded appropriately to those deputations.

After much discussion as to the minimum number of members a library board would be required to have, the standing committee has decided to recommend that no fewer than three members should sit on a duly constituted library board, and that is also in keeping with many of the comments raised by deputants before the committee — three members. I also point out that that is the minimum number in the bill, as amended.

I would like to take this opportunity as well, on behalf of the minister, to thank all those who took part in the standing committee's review of this legislation, particularly the many people from around the province who took the time and made the effort to submit briefs and attend the hearings. I want to give them comfort to know that each and every one of us read those briefs diligently and listened very carefully to the deputations.

Our new library framework is appropriate for the age of the knowledge-based society — the minister was making that point, and I want to re-emphasize that — and the information economy that is before us now, two developments in which I am pleased to say Ontario has led the way. As new systems of information technology have been developed and applied to business, government and the institutions of learning, our libraries have made this state-of-the-art technology available to the public.

Even while our libraries are bringing us information on the electronic highways, they are continuing to fulfil their traditional and much beloved roles in society. Libraries are the places where youngsters have some of their earliest and most memorable experiences with the written word. Libraries are at the forefront of our literacy efforts. They are the storehouses of community information and of the collected wisdom of mankind throughout the ages.

But as I said, Ontario's relationship with our public libraries is changing. Under our proposed new library framework, the province would continue to develop its support for and involvement in the system that connects our libraries with one another and, I also point out, with the world. The province would continue to build on the support of the Ontario Library Service. The OLS resource-sharing system facilitates the sharing of print materials, electronic database access and Internet resources among librarians.

The province would also continue to be active in developing library policy, in setting standards and assisting libraries to achieve the standards necessary to make full use of the provincial library systems.

The province is now active and would continue to be active in encouraging and facilitating cost-saving measures such as the coming together of publicly funded resource centres. Under the new library framework, local communities would be encouraged to make cost-effective alliances and partnerships best suited to their particular needs. As the name of the act declares, there would be more local control.

I know that some of my colleagues in the opposition have serious reservations about such local control. I will recall the comments of the distinguished member from Nickel Belt, a member I have consummate regard for, at the time of the previous revision of the Public Libraries Act. Will you permit me, Mr Speaker, to remind us that Mr Laughren expressed his view that library boards "are more democratic in nature than even school boards or municipal councils"? His major concern was the power of municipal councils, and at the suggestion that municipal councils should have line-by-line control over the budgets of library boards, Mr Laughren stated, "I think that is simply horrendous." Democracy shocks my friend and colleague.

Mr Laughren continued: "It is going to allow the municipal council to say, 'We think you are buying the wrong kind of books.' I hope I'm not reading too much into this, because I do not mean simply to raise a red flag, but what if the municipal council says, 'We think your books are simply too liberal' — by that I mean small-l liberal, of course."

This is a direct quote, I say to my colleague from Port Arthur. "We think they are too liberated," he perhaps meant. "We do not like all these books on women's liberation. We do not like these books on liberation theology."

In another quarter, I may have an interesting and spirited debate with my colleague on liberation theology, but for now I find it appropriate to at least raise on the floor

Mr Laughren's classic response. It bespeaks an attitude of a party towards local government which I find at the very least bemusing.

I ask you to also remember the words of —

**Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York):** Mr Speaker, on a point of order: I believe there is no quorum, and there should be, because we need to hear this member.

**The Acting Speaker:** Could the table determine whether there is a quorum in the House, please.

**Clerk Assistant (Ms Deborah Deller):** A quorum is not present, Speaker.

*The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.*

**Clerk Assistant:** A quorum is now present, Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Member for High Park-Swansea.

**Mr Shea:** Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I appreciate the intervention by the member for Fort York because I want to turn my attention to him for just a moment. It was very timely that he made that usual intervention because I want to remind us of his remarks when we were debating this bill a little earlier this year. Let me just quote, and please listen very carefully to the thoughts behind these words. The member for Fort York said:

"Giving full governance to the municipalities means that we no longer have the kind of library system where we're guaranteed a majority of public citizens, ordinary citizens, to be there to preserve the public interest. When we take that away, which is what we had under the old act, we no longer will have, I suspect and fear, a citizenry that will be controlling those library boards, but we will have who knows what. We will have municipalities which will take complete control of those library systems, as many have wanted to do in the past... Many municipalities may decide that we don't need chief librarians, that we can take it over by a bureaucracy of our municipal government and run it through other librarians, let them run whatever remains of our libraries in those towns and/or counties."

What in heaven's name does he mean by these words "ordinary citizens, to be there to preserve the public interest"? What does the member for Fort York think about locally elected members of council? I despair when I hear that kind of philosophy. I despair because it could be interpreted as arrogance on the one hand or abysmal ignorance on the other side. I despair when I see that. However, I suppose the member will have an explanation of why he won't trust locally elected councils, and we will look forward to hearing that with interest.

More than that, perhaps he will say why his party would believe that way, why he would run in the face of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, which represents the municipalities of this province, who have said, "This is what they want," and run in the face of what the Who Does What panel has said. My dear colleague from the riding of Fort York and his party obviously won't trust the people and whom they elect to the office of council. I find that rather sad. He hides behind appointed agencies, boards and commissions, as though democracy can be positive there and is not to be found in elected councils. It

may be that he arrives at that conclusion because he has never served on a municipal council. Had he served on such a council, I think he would be the first to rise in anger and outrage.

1610

To address the concern of the composition of the new library boards, I should point out the following: I am aware of several municipalities where there have already been informal discussions between the library board, the librarian and the municipality regarding the wording of the new bylaw to be presented to the new council. Surely such proactive measures as these on the part of the library community, working with their local councils, will do much to alleviate any tensions or concerns about the relationships of future library boards with their municipal councils.

The new framework would come into effect when the new councils take office following the 1997 municipal elections. As such, Bill 109 does respond to the government's Who Does What initiative to realign responsibilities between the provincial and municipal levels of government, and it's long overdue.

I should point out that neither the Who Does What exercise nor our proposed amendments will have any effect on the provincial funding for the approximately 50 first nations libraries, most of which receive in excess of 75% of their funding from the government of Ontario. Be very clear about what I said in that regard: No effect on approximately 50 first nations libraries, most of which receive in excess of 75% of their funding from the government of Ontario.

With technological advances and the trend towards electronic publishing being more and more the norm, there's some information that is only available or best accessed in electronic form. It's important that this information be made available to the public.

In the last century, information was disseminated in printed form. Libraries were founded to give access to this information to the public, not just to the privileged few who owned large collections of books. In this century and the next, more and more information will be disseminated in electronic form. Once again, our libraries will be there to see that this information is also available to the public, not just to those who own their own electronic hardware.

On June 6, the Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, the Honourable Marilyn Mushinski, attended the official inauguration of six dedicated Internet workstations at the Scugog Public Library in Port Perry. This is an important local initiative which will make the vast information resources of the global information highway available to residents. Our goal is to ensure that every public library in Ontario is able to offer electronic access to information. This will be an important objective under the new library framework.

Under this new library framework, libraries would continue to offer — and I want you to mark these words, please — free access to library facilities; use of library collections on library premises would continue to be free of charge, as would the borrowing of books and other

printed material by residents. Borrowing of special-format materials for residents with disabilities would also be offered by the libraries without charge. Watch my lips: free, without charge.

I'd like to point out to my colleagues that the phrase "library collections" provides a wide interpretation entirely suitable for the wide range of media in which information is now presented. The wording currently in effect is "library materials," which does not clearly include information in an electronic medium.

There are some services for which the libraries' patrons must pay on a per-use basis, as they do now. The new library framework would clarify that libraries would have the right to pass certain charges on to their users if they choose to do so. The fees, if any, for such services would be determined by the local library boards.

Those boards, I remind you, would be directly accountable to the local council, which is directly accountable and elected by the people. Why the opposition party and the third party find that principle of democracy offensive is simply beyond me.

One possible user fee might be for the take-home use of videos. I know from the librarian of the Michipicoten Public Library in northern Ontario that they expect that the revenue from videos alone will exceed the funding shortfall that might arise from the Who Does What exercise. Please hear those words again, Mr Speaker, because I know you sat up most attentively to hear those words: They expect that the revenue from videos alone will exceed the funding shortfall that might arise from the Who Does What exercise.

That particular library could then increase its revenues without requiring an increase in funding from the township. That's extremely important. This is one of the many strengths of this bill. More flexibility will be given to each municipality to determine the best method of serving the public in their area.

AMO supports this bill. Why doesn't the opposition? As Grant Hopcroft, deputy mayor of London, Ontario, said in the hearings, the bill "addresses our need for more local control, efficiency and accountability while at the same time ensuring that public access to libraries is not jeopardized." This is indeed the intention of the act. This government has listened; this government has responded to those requests. It's gratifying to see that our efforts in this regard have been recognized.

Under the new library framework, communities would have control of their libraries. At the same time, free access to information, including information in media whose existence could not have been anticipated when the province of Canada — I say again, the province of Canada — passed our first Public Libraries Act in 1851, would be guaranteed.

This legislation and the new library framework would be an important footing on which libraries could continue to build their very proud traditions. I am most pleased to recommend Bill 109, as amended, to the members of this House.

**Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke-Rexdale):** I'm absolutely delighted to support Bill 109, because what it will do, as the member for High Park-Swansea reiterated more than once, is enhance flexibility. It's going to be interesting to hear, but I'm going to try and anticipate what the members of the opposition will probably raise; that is, that these libraries won't be able to operate in this new regime because the only option they'll have is to increase taxes.

In a fiscal restraint context, in the Etobicoke Public Library board, of which I had the privilege to be the chair for three years, and lots of other smaller, larger and medium-sized library boards in Ontario from 1992 through to 1995, what happened? Libraries saw decreases in the amount of money they got from both the provincial government at that time and from the municipalities, yet in many instances, Etobicoke being only one, they were able to build new libraries, replacing old capital plant that had been around 50 years, and they were able to be flexible in terms of customizing business services, as the Metropolitan Toronto Reference Library was able to do, and lots of other libraries in Ontario.

To bring up the spectre that they're only going to raise taxes and lower municipal library service is absolutely inaccurate, absolutely non-factual when you look at the history of what library professionals were doing long before this bill came along. Now that we have this bill on the books, when it gets royal assent it's going to enhance flexibility of service, and also at the same time retrieve and retain intellectual access and freedom.

On those principles, I recommend this bill very highly to this House.

1620

**The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson):** Questions and comments?

**Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur):** I'm glad to have an opportunity to respond to the minister, the member for High Park-Swansea and the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale. The member for Etobicoke-Rexdale clearly wasn't at the public hearings and didn't hear the representations that were being made all across this province, which made it very clear that the word "flexibility" you're using really is a cruel word. The fact is that we are putting libraries in a position where, in essence, they are going to be literally hounded out of existence in terms of some of the smaller communities. You have to listen to them to hear that.

The member for High Park-Swansea doesn't talk about the pure reality. They don't tell you that in essence what they've done is that this bill has removed all provincial funding, all per-household grants to the libraries in the province. Regardless of what he may say about one particular board saying they can raise the revenues, the fact is that in some municipalities that per-household grant was absolutely crucial to them surviving.

What is comes down to, though, is whether this government feels committed to libraries at all. It became very clear to us when this process began that this process is just part of the Who Does What downloading package.

I have great respect for the member for High Park-Swansea, but during the public hearings, and certainly during the clause-by-clause, he kept making reference to the fact that we didn't trust the municipalities. We trust the municipalities very much. They've been very strong supporters of libraries. They pay the bulk of the funding. The fact is that what's happened to the municipalities is that they will now be in a position where they will be expected to increase the amount of funding they provide to libraries to maintain the level of service they have, which they will not be able to do because of the downloading process that has taken place.

There are a variety of issues that need to be addressed. I look forward to having a greater opportunity to respond when my turn comes around. The question of a citizen majority on boards is a crucial one, again addressed by delegation upon delegation, how important it was to maintain citizen-majority boards. I'll look forward to hearing and talking further about this.

**Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie):** I've been waiting quite some time for this opportunity to say initially some brief words about this act. I travelled with the committee as it went around the province. On behalf of my colleague the member for Downsview, who has equally —

**Mr Silipo:** Dovercourt.

**Mr Martin:** Dovercourt. Let's get this straight. It's close. We used to have a member for Downsview who was very good in this House, and he will be back after the next election.

The member for Dovercourt has a tremendous interest in this piece of legislation. It was good to be able to bring back to him some of what I heard the people of Ontario saying about this piece of work by this government. It's really not very complicated. This piece of business is consistent with everything else this government has been doing over its short tenure of two years and some months here at Queen's Park.

It's about taking money out. It's about removing money. It's about downsizing the presence of government in communities by way of, in this instance, libraries. It's about diminishing the role of libraries. It's about making sure that people out there have fewer resources to access so they can take on this government in significant ways and so they can participate more fully in the life of their community. It's about taking away control.

One of the messages that came through loud and clear was the issue of democratic control, of citizen participation on the boards of directors of libraries. It's very clearly about that. It's in some instances about the very survival of libraries, particularly in smaller communities. We had a number of people come from smaller communities speaking very eloquently and passionately about the role and the importance of libraries in their particular communities. They were afraid that at the end of the day under this bill they would have no library and no access to libraries. That would be very sad.

**Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland):** It's interesting to hear the different comments. First, my compliments to the minister and the member for High Park-Swansea and also

the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale for some excellent presentations on this bill, the problem and what's evolving with it.

I'm a little disappointed with what I'm hearing from across the House. It's obvious they're not up to date and current on activities and happenings in libraries.

Originally, libraries were books, magazines and newspapers. They came in at a time, back in the late 1800s, when they were desperately needed. People like Carnegie gave a tremendous amount of money and built some 111 libraries in Ontario. But things have changed since then. We're now into the information age, which Canada is really leading in, particularly here in Ontario; as a matter of fact, we're doing an awful lot of export of our information technology. I think it's time that the NDP and the Liberals were aware of what's going on in libraries and give to municipalities the tools they can use and take advantage of and have in their libraries and maybe charge, if they see fit, for some of those things in their libraries.

Libraries are no longer simply books and magazines and newspapers; it's a very different kind of operation than it was at the turn of the century or just a few decades ago. It's important to keep that very much in mind. They're high-quality libraries, and we just have to get on with current activities and what's needed in these libraries; not hamstringing the municipalities as to what they can or cannot do, but get rid of some of the prescriptive rules and regulations that have been in the previous legislation.

This is certainly the direction to go. I don't think there's any question that if you sort out this particular bill, this happens to be a management issue. It's certainly not simply an emotional issue, as they demonstrate.

**Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre):** I'd like to comment on the presentations by the minister as well as the member for High Park-Swansea and build on some comments made by my colleague from Port Arthur.

The biggest worry — I have a quote from a presenter at the hearings which I'd like to share: "The overall context is pressure, financial pressure in a changing world of communications and a changing concept of literacy. It's not just books any more, as we all know. We get our information from all different sources."

It's in this evolution of technological change where the pressures are going to come from, where the inaccessibility is going to exist. As someone has pointed out, there are some charges now. There will probably be more charges, if the service is even offered, in order to provide the vast array of opportunities to retrieve documents or even to have access to other libraries.

Heather Menzies, whom I know, represented the Ontario Library Association. She said that:

"In Ontario, Bill 109 threatens to make this a whole lot worse, not just because the province is terminating its partial funding of libraries in the province, dumping the whole \$30-million cost on to individual municipalities," which can't afford to pick up the difference on their own.

In cases like Ottawa, in my riding, "city officials are offering no guarantees to people like Barbara Clubb, who is the chief librarian of the Ottawa Public Library....

Equally, if not more importantly in terms of the under-development dynamic, the legislation will also end the requirement for independent citizen library boards." I hear the minister saying she is reviewing that. I hope she does come up with an amendment that will address that factor.

**The Acting Speaker:** The minister has two minutes to respond.

**Hon Ms Mushinski:** There are several things that have been said that I feel need to be corrected. First of all, the member for Port Arthur says this really is only as a result of the Who Does What initiative. He's wrong. This consultation process has taken place over the last two years, and I think what was important about that consultation process is the results of the legislation in Bill 109, because those results reflect clearly the input that was provided primarily by users and municipalities as a result of that consultation process.

It's interesting that I keep hearing this doom and gloom about the death of libraries, but I think what the legislation also speaks to is that there is a provincial interest in continuing to support a very strong library network. As a result of that we envision a strengthening of local libraries through that particular library network, including the interlibrary loan system, and that is something they failed to mention was a part of that input we will also receive through that consultation process.

In responding to the comments made by the honourable member for Ottawa Centre, I can only allude to one particular statement that was made here from the city of Nepean on April 9, 1997, when councillor Rick Chiarelli and councillor Doug Collins said that the library system was revitalized under the new Public Libraries Act of 1984.

1630

**Mr Gravelle:** I am glad to finally have the opportunity to speak on behalf of the public library users and the public libraries and all those who care about the health of our library system in terms of Bill 109, a bill that I think in many ways is going to lead to a very, very badly managed system and one that will not be able to survive, and I don't view that as a doom-and-gloom scenario so much as simply a reality of what we have seen in this bill.

Before I start with my remarks, I should probably let the people of Ontario know that in some way we are lucky to have third reading debate taking place at all, because last week the government put forward a time allocation motion on this particular bill, which in essence would have absolutely eliminated debate on third reading altogether, something that is virtually unprecedented in this province. There was an extraordinary outcry when we learned that it was the intention to do that, to simply decide there was going to be time allocation put forward. We would have debated the time allocation. We would have had third reading. The people of Ontario should have been outraged by that — they were — and certainly responded very strongly, and I presume that the minister recognized that the outrage was unacceptable and decided that third reading should go forward.

Having said that, we certainly hope there will be an opportunity to debate this bill more than just one sessional day. That is the impression we are getting. A variety of my colleagues — the member for Renfrew North, the member for Kingston and the Islands, the member for Ottawa Centre — have made it clear they would like to have an opportunity to speak on this. I hope there is an opportunity to have another sessional day or two to discuss this, as we believe this is a very important bill. We think it is insulting that the government tried to simply sneak this by in terms of time allocation, although they have now obviously relented and are having third reading debate.

I want to use my time as best I can, recognizing that my colleague from Dovercourt also wants an opportunity to have some remarks today. With that fear being built in that we may not have another opportunity to do so, I will use my time as carefully as possible.

I want to start by explaining what this bill is all about. The government is going to put a spin on this, and I guess that is what governments do and that is recognized. It is recognized that it is what politicians do. What we want to do is make you understand, and the library community users understand this, that this bill really is about downloading. It is about giving this government essentially an escape chute, if you will, for a responsibility for Ontario's 412 public library systems. It is not about finding efficiencies or any duplication; it is about taking a system that works and essentially trying to break it.

We have the Public Libraries Act of 1984 that was still very much a workable library act and was only changed because of the downloading realities. It is not about improving public libraries, as the minister suggested when the bill was first introduced; it is about ending the provincial role in a 140-plus-year public library tradition in Ontario, and it is about creating a patchwork of underfunded libraries across this province.

This bill is about tossing away provincial responsibility for libraries by dumping millions of dollars of new financial responsibility on to municipalities. Through this downloading process, we do believe, and municipalities have spoken to us about this — certainly the library boards have — that municipalities will be left without the resources to maintain local library service to the current standards. I think that is why it is important to point out that municipalities have been extraordinarily supportive of libraries across this province, but this bill will put them in a position where not only do they have the extraordinary pressures of being faced by the variety of downloading measures that have come upon them, but they will be asked or expected to even raise their current level of support, and I think that is simply unrealistic.

This bill, we believe, truly destroys public library standards in Ontario. We believe the minister's credibility has suffered on this issue and we believe that values such as universal access to libraries have literally gone out the window. The member for Northumberland, for example, talked about the new reality in libraries, and he was quite right. What he didn't refer to and should have was that the only thing that is guaranteed in terms of free usage is core

activities, which come down to print material. If the member for Northumberland had read that bill more carefully, he would recognize that one of the real dangers is that in our new technology, as things change, access to the Internet, access to all the technological advances are where user fees now will be — if not allowed, the libraries will be forced to implement that.

On April 7, when we began our public hearings, the minister of culture said she would be open to amendments for Bill 109. On May 15, her parliamentary assistant, my colleague from High Park-Swansea, essentially orchestrated the defeat of almost every single opposition amendment to Bill 109. It was pretty extraordinary to listen to the minister on the one hand say she would listen to these concerns, and then to watch as we sat there in clause-by-clause while her parliamentary assistant could not find a way to support any of the measures, many of which were not that difficult for the government to support if they truly cared about the library system and wanted to maintain some level of accountability.

One looks at the Common Sense Revolution, and I can't recall the Common Sense Revolution saying that a literate population is not a priority, but that is what this bill means and that is what we keep seeing in this House when we watch what is happening with the Ministry of Education. I do not recall the Common Sense Revolution saying that any persons, regardless of age, regardless of ability to pay, regardless of geography, would be denied access to their public libraries, but as a result of this bill that is what it will ultimately mean as well. I do not recall the revolution saying that lifelong learning or the educational and informational needs of every Ontarian are not important, but that is what this bill will ultimately end up meaning. There is really no way the government members can get around that when one looks at what is in this bill and what the results are down the road. The support system is not there.

The Ontario Liberals believe in the tradition of public libraries. We understand the importance of libraries in this information age. Each and every government member across the way clearly has not read the bill, does not understand the bill, if they are simply going along and following on what again is the government mandate. I certainly want at this stage to applaud all the public libraries and all the library users, the friends of libraries across the province, who spoke to all their provincial members, many of whom I know were government members. Those library boards spoke in very clear terms about the concerns they had about the bill. It would be heartening to have the members on the government side now at least expressing the concerns they expressed, because those concerns came up very quickly in the process.

The government always uses the terms of talking about accountability and they suggest we don't trust municipalities. We trust municipalities; what we do not trust is a government that has no concern about accountability itself. We tried in clause-by-clause to put forward a number of amendments that would at least maintain some level of accountability by this government, including

suggesting, once it was recognized there was not going to be any support for our amendments, to at least find ways of monitoring the process — “Let’s watch what happens” — and have some process by which there is reporting back to the Legislative Assembly on what is happening in the library system. Even those were defeated. All this government ultimately has to do is look at the public meeting process that took place, look at the presentations that were made by concerned members of the public and all those who came forward, and the government literally has ignored the concerns of every single individual or group that came forward to make a deputation before the standing committee.

I want to use some time to state my position, our position, our concern about the importance of public libraries. That has not been expressed by the government members in any real way, and I’m sure there won’t be any argument here. Certainly we know that libraries are important to children, they’re important to seniors, they’re important to the unemployed. They are important.

1640

I recall the member for High Park-Swansea talking about democracy. They are one of the truly democratic places where everybody is welcome. This is what we feel ultimately will be threatened by the process that is starting with this particular bill.

We know that libraries are important to the people in each and every community in Ontario, whether they live in a Toronto neighbourhood or a rural community in northern Ontario. Libraries are important to the information needs of every Ontarian as we approach a new century where access to information will become even more important. Libraries are important to the information, education, recreation, leisure and civic needs of all Ontario residents.

Libraries are important to the values of lifelong learning and very much connected with the education system. They are important to ensuring that we have a literate population. It’s ironic that yesterday was International Literacy Day, a day taken by the Ontario Literacy Coalition, along with the Thunder Bay Literacy Coalition, to remind this government of a declaration signed by Canada and the world. I will take some time just to read the declaration:

“Literacy, conceived broadly as the basic knowledge and skills needed by all in a rapidly changing world, is a fundamental human right. In every society, literacy is a necessary skill in itself and one of the foundations of other life skills.

“We therefore commit ourselves to ensuring opportunities for all to acquire and maintain literacy skills. The provision of learning opportunities for all, including the unrelated and the excluded, is the most urgent concern.”

It seems quite ironic to me that a piece of legislation such as this, which ultimately will make accessibility to libraries far more difficult, that will change the process by which libraries are funded, that will make this government itself ultimately totally non-accountable for the process in this province, is very, very sad — a day after we are proclaiming International Literacy Day.

There is an interesting document that was sent to me, and on behalf of the authors and the publishers of the document, I passed it on to every member of this Legislature. I certainly hope all of them took the opportunity to read it.

The document is called *Dividends: The Value of Public Libraries in Canada*. Nancy Fleming, the executive director of the Book and Periodical Council, graciously provided me with copies of this excellent resource which I distributed to the members in August. I want to have an opportunity to at least make some reference to some of the issues she brings forward. I should probably be fair: It’s researched by Jody Warner, written by Leslie Fitch and Jody Warner, and it was for the library action committee of the Book and Periodical Council. So it’s an important document that I hope the members of the House had an opportunity to read. If I have more time later, I will perhaps get back to it, but this is an important paragraph that I want to read right now.

“The reduction of a library’s budget has an impact more profound than a simple decrease in the number of items acquired at that library. Budget reductions affect publishers and vendors, library users, staffing and service levels, service hours and the quality of library collections, and compromise the necessity to add new technologies. At a time when more Canadians than ever need and use public library services, budget cuts threaten the staff and services that users require for success in their day-to-day lives.” Those are incredibly important words.

We look at this piece of legislation, a piece of legislation that, based on just the facts of it, absolutely sets up a system of underfunded libraries across this province. There is no question that when you take a government that previously provided some funding, although the government has had two years of previous cuts that the libraries have been forced to adapt to, but when you remove that support altogether, especially in some of the smaller library branches, you’re simply setting up a system. To say that the video collection can make up for it in terms of user fees is unfair, it’s inaccurate, and I just find it irresponsible for the government members to talk in those terms.

What I said at the beginning is just so true: This is about downloading. This is part of the Who Does What exercise. Despite what the minister said in her response, it’s part of the package that is being forced upon municipalities. The fact is that the municipalities may indeed need the tools to deal with this reality. They don’t want this so much as they may require this. As we said all through the hearings process, and continued when the opportunity came up, municipalities are in a position where they have no choice but to essentially deliver and force some of these realities on to the public in terms of user fees.

That’s where we also have to deal with the fact that the citizen-majority boards, a long-standing and important tradition in the library system, are being done away with. No matter how the government paints this picture about the number of members on the library board — and we

appreciated and supported that there were three members of the community on it — the fact is it is not going to be a citizen majority. We think that's terribly important for a number of reasons: for intellectual freedom reasons; for the reasons of being able to fight for what they believe in; and for finding, we believe, as does almost everyone who made a presentation, that citizen majorities are crucial to maintaining the integrity of the library system.

We look at a bill that does those things: removes the per household grant and creates a setup where municipalities will have the potential and the likelihood of setting up a board system that can be literally run from within their own municipal structure.

In terms of the doom-and-gloom scenario, let me say that we know this is not going to mean the system is closing down in the course of the next year. What we see is that without the support from this province in terms of provincial government support, over the course of a number of years we're going to see more and more systems being threatened and closed down. That's why we wanted to have a process in this legislation to at least monitor what was going on. I think that is absolutely crucial, and we're not getting that opportunity.

We are seeing now the Atikokan library literally being forced to close down for 11 weeks in the summertime because they can't get the financial support they need. We know that various municipalities have made it very, very clear to librarians and board members that they cannot expect more support and in fact may expect much less support, depending on what the downloading realities are.

It's appalling to me, frankly, that the government can simply withdraw from this process and talk about the fact that they've got an interlibrary loan system that is still in place. That's threatened as well because that costs money. You can't simply say, "The interlibrary loan system is going to stay in place." It's a very important part of the process but it's absolutely threatened because of this bill and because of the withdrawal of funding.

When the government tabled Bill 109 during mega-disaster week here in the Legislature in January, nine months ago, this government certainly heaped on the rhetoric of how their downloading plans would be better for the people of Ontario. They defended actions which I think in most cases were indefensible. They spoke of the value of dumping public health — extraordinarily wrong — and social housing — I can't believe they're doing it — ambulance services, social programs and public libraries on to the property taxpayers of this province. They've used words like "accountability" and "flexibility" to achieve local needs. The minister actually had the audacity to predict that library services would be improved in the province. She said we would be getting more libraries with no more provincial dollars flowed.

*Applause.*

**Mr Gravelle:** The member for Nepean is applauding. I just find it astonishing that we can have improved library service. I wonder if you've actually looked at Bill 109. Have you looked at Bill 109 and seen what the changes are and seen the fact that there is no accountability?

*Interjections.*

**Mr Gravelle:** I appreciate that the government members are going to be in lockstep in terms of this legislation, but I ask you to look at it very carefully, not just at the libraries in your own communities, because what we're looking at is a patchwork. Some communities will be able to maintain their public library system in much the same fashion, I won't deny that. I know in the city of Thunder Bay, my community, the loss of the per household grant is about a quarter of a million dollars. I have no doubt that the public library system will be retained in Thunder Bay, but it may be difficult to maintain it at the level it is. It may be difficult to maintain all the branches. The smaller communities, which I think this government just tends to want to ignore, the small and rural communities, we know how threatened they are. We are seeing it happen before this bill goes into effect.

But there is no question that this bill is going to have an extraordinary effect. I think the members of the government, while they will applaud and back up their minister in this, should look at this very carefully because they will also be held accountable for what happens to the library system in this province.

1650

This may very well be the last day, the only day we will get to debate this bill. Again I call on the government and implore them to allow more debate on this because there are so many members of the Legislature who want to have an opportunity to talk about their communities. They have all talked to their communities. But on behalf of the Ontario Liberals and our caucus, I want to thank and congratulate those from the library community and the friends of the library and those who care about the library who came forward to speak on aspects of this bill and to write letters and to send petitions. It was an extraordinary outpouring. I do not know how the minister could ignore and say the things she said in her opening remarks today.

The library community is filled with individuals who care passionately about public libraries in this province. I want to personally thank all those who came forward to speak or those who wrote.

I'll say to the members of this House there is a strong, creative and compassionate corps of people working and volunteering for public libraries and they deserve our respect and praise.

While we have no time — very little time in fact — there are some people I want to mention, and in advance I apologize for not being able to literally pull out my extraordinarily thick piece of paper with all the people who gave their presentations. They all were extraordinary, but there many we spoke with very often and they helped us out and I want to mention them. I apologize if I mispronounce some of their names, and I'll do this as quickly as I can:

Linda Linton, the president of the Ontario Public Library Association; Steven Burdick and Janet Walker, from CUPE, Toronto library locals; Hilary Bates Neary, Ontario Library Trustees' Association; Karen McLean, from the East Gwillimbury Public Library; Wendy Newman,

from the Brantford Public Library; Rick Goldsmith, a strong supporter of the Toronto Public Library; Reed Osborne, from the London Public Library; Barbara Taylor, from St Mary's Public Library; Harry Nesbitt, from the Stratford Public Library; Patricia Moody, from the Woodstock Public Library; Susan Moskal, from the Ontario College and University Library Association; Viola Poletes, Friends of the London Public Library; Frances Marin, from Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry County Library; Lori Nash, from the Friends of the Library of Cumberland township; Eric Hicks, from the Gloucester Public Library; the Ontario women teachers' federation; Alan Pepper, from the Northern Ontario Library Service; and Moses Sheppard, from the United Steelworkers in Thunder Bay in northwestern Ontario; Larry Moore, the executive director of the Ontario Library Association; and Greg Hayton, the president.

There were some people from northern Ontario, and again an extraordinary list. I am so conscious that under these new rule changes we are so limited in terms of the time we have to debate. There is not very much time left. The member for Nepean mocks that. I just find it astonishing.

**Mr John R. Baird (Nepean):** Forty minutes?

**Mr Gravelle:** Exactly. I've got lots of need here and I won't carry on arguing with you, so I apologize.

Other people who should be acknowledged, because there are many who should be acknowledged:

Margaret MacLean and Karen Harrison, from the Thunder Bay Public Library; Laurie Wright —

**Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma):** Hear, hear.

**Mr Gravelle:** Thank you — from the Red Rock Public Library; Jackie Boughner, from the Beardmore Public Library.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Gravelle:** The member for Lake Nipigon is very interested and I appreciate that. Members from his riding: Bryan Buffet, from the Dryden Public Library.

**Mr Wildman:** He didn't agree with the first one.

**Mr Gravelle:** No, he didn't. Elizabeth Russell, from the Ignace Public Library; Carol Cooke, from the Geraldton Public Library, whose son was a page here in the Legislature previously and very proud to be so; Jeanne Marcella, of the Terrace Bay Public Library came forward and wrote us about this; Susan Lawson, from the Burlington Public Library; Doris Brown, from the Atikokan Public Library; Valerie Scott, from the Cobourg Public Library; Steve Salmon, from the Windsor Public Library; Frances Schwenger and Maureen Rudzik from the Metropolitan Toronto Reference Library.

While I can't name all those in the library community who proved an invaluable resource through the discussion of this bill, I would like to use the opportunity to read for the record some of the various comments and concerns that other people brought forward. I am going to just find my letters here.

This is from Darlene MacLeod, who is a Toronto Public Library worker. I don't know if I can read her entire

letter, but I'm going to try. It's an extraordinary letter that really says it all:

"It is with a heavy heart that I write this letter to you. I was born and raised in southern Ontario and although I have studied and lived in other countries, I find myself settled in Toronto. I have considered library services to be an essential part of my life and I am greatly concerned about the impact of Bill 109 on libraries throughout Ontario.

"As a child I was instrumental in having our Wainfleet library board established by circulating a petition at our rural village school. The village fathers at that time appreciated the democratic expression that was instigated by the students. Today, the library is a symbol of civic pride that provides a wonderful service to the members of my family that remain in the village.

"While teaching in London, England, I was greatly impressed by the public library archives that are available for research by individuals from the world community. These invaluable resources are as precious as gold. They also provide sources of revenue generation, not by charging people to use them, but by allowing businesses within the locale to prosper from the many people who travel worldwide to study and research in these great libraries. These collections did not appear overnight; they had been painstakingly preserved and treasured for hundreds of years. Libraries are a long-term commitment to the future of any culture and civilization. The province of Ontario has an obligation to preserve libraries and library services. Ongoing funding is still needed to allow libraries to continue to introduce and provide information technologies to the public. The future and the past are embraced and nurtured in a public library system. This is an asset that has been well established in this province. To withdraw support at this critical moment in the information revolution is shortsighted and will be considered a tragedy by historians in the future.

"In an effort to save tax dollars, we are destroying our libraries. Highly trained and experienced staff are undervalued. Collections are and will be dispersed, dismantled and withdrawn from public use. Libraries have been closed, libraries that house special collections are being withdrawn and since they are undervalued, are being trashed or sold for a pittance. As a public servant and a keeper of the public trust, I implore you to request the government of the province of Ontario to reconsider the passage of Bill 109. It is not too late to revalue and reinvest in our library collections.

"Citizen library boards and free access to information are the very cornerstone of our civilization. To reduce funding of libraries, to reduce freedom of access, to reduce citizen involvement in these institutions is a grave mistake that will have implications on the future of our culture and civilization and its economic prosperity."

It's hard to imagine a more impassioned letter and more concern being expressed. I feel absolutely touched by it because I think that was the expression we saw and heard across the province continually.

If I may, I want to read a few others. Again, we're so limited in time, but some comments from Rick Goldsmith, the chair of the Toronto Public Library board:

"Volunteers and citizen participation are invaluable assets of current library boards. Bill 109 should enshrine citizen involvement on boards. Without such a guarantee, intellectual freedom, local responsiveness and grass-roots empowerment will be compromised.

"Bill 109 also threatens free access to information by those citizens who need it the most, and as such, places our entire free public library system at risk. We were very disappointed that the current government would not amend Bill 109 to reflect our concerns."

It's just extraordinary when one hears the concerns that are being expressed consistently by all the people who wrote, who spoke, who came forward to the committee hearings. It is astonishing to continue to see this government try and paint this as being a piece of legislation that will ultimately improve the library system in this province when it is so very clear that those people who understand how the library system works, those people who care about how it ties into our educational system, recognize that what will happen ultimately is going to, if not destroy the system, certainly put it at great peril. When you combine it with all the other downloading functions, it's really quite frightening.

May I read on? The Writers' Union of Canada passed a motion condemning the Ontario government's Bill 109, and I'm going to read it:

"Whereas the libraries have been fundamental in bringing books to the public; and

"Whereas the libraries have been among our staunchest allies in the fight against censorship; and

"Whereas the libraries have provided economic benefit to writers through public lending rights, Writers in the Libraries program and by hosting readings; and

"Whereas the Ontario government has introduced legislation which threatens these services, and similar threats have arisen in other jurisdictions such as Alberta and Manitoba" — and may I say, in Alberta they are looking at it very carefully because they recognize the loss of citizen-majority boards has caused enormous problems;

"Be it therefore resolved that the Writers' Union of Canada convey to the Ontario government its strong opposition to this legislation, and to threats in other jurisdictions; and

"Be it further resolved that the Writers' Union of Canada communicate these concerns to the public."

They have done so very strongly and very, very well.

1700

My colleague spoke earlier of the speech that Heather Menzies, an acclaimed writer in Canada, gave to the Canadian Library Association a couple of months ago. She did make reference to Bill 109. I'm glad that he had an opportunity to speak on some of her comments because she expressed great concern about Bill 109 and made it very, very clear that Bill 109 was truly threatening access to free public libraries in our province and that we are

setting up a situation where we are going to have nothing but a patchwork of library services in this province.

These individuals, and dozens and hundreds more, have offered near-unanimous opposition to Bill 109. They have spoken and they have written about the dangers of losing citizen-majority boards. They've spoken about the loss of the per household grant. Regardless of whether or not the government members think that's a significant amount or not, it's absolutely crucial to maintaining the standards we need in our library system. They talk about the loss of the universality of access to public libraries.

One recognizes that when the government says, "Yes, we will provide free access to core services," they mean books, they mean some print material, they don't mean the realities that we are into now and in the future. For example, Hansard, the document that we basically live by in the sense of where our words are spoken is no longer available in print at the library; it's only on the Internet system. It really is no longer going into print form. You're looking at a reality where the Ontario government itself is reducing access to Hansard, the document that is supposed to be our Bible.

It's important to state also that thousands and thousands of individuals signed petitions on behalf of Ontario's four million library users. They were supported by many editorials written by a variety of papers across this province. I want to mention some of the editorials that were written and talk about them because I think they were significant. I think it's important to note them.

The Peterborough Examiner said, "Without public participation on library boards, it's not a large leap from financial control to political control and finally to censorship." Words to be careful about.

It's very clear that indeed the citizen-majority boards are ones that municipalities may want to maintain. Again, I want to make it clear that I don't believe that all municipalities will now simply get rid of the citizen-majority boards. I know some will. It's the pressures they are going to be under to manage the funding of all the downloading realities that are coming upon them that are going to have libraries competing ultimately with services they shouldn't be competing with.

It's a question of how important are libraries to us. They're pretty important. I'd like to think everybody in this House thinks libraries are pretty important, which is why it was so offensive to have the minister and this government consider eliminating debate completely at third reading level by forcing a time allocation motion. I'm grateful that the pressure got to them and they retreated on that. The fact is this is an important piece of legislation, one that perhaps hasn't received enough attention, but when one watches everything this government has done, it's very difficult to have enough attention — and with the rule changes being in effect.

Let me tell you about the Toronto Star. They dedicated two editorials to the subject of public libraries this year alone. The second editorial spoke on the recent 10-day closure of the Metro Toronto Reference Library, which is an issue that I'm sure my colleague from Dovercourt will

speak about. Before I read the editorial, the fact is that the Metro Toronto Reference Library is a library for all Ontarians. It's a library that needs to maintain its own governance. It's a library system, a reference system that's incredibly important.

During clause-by-clause my colleague and I actually felt that the government was being sensitive to us. To be fair to the member for High Park-Swansea, indeed we agreed that a recommendation should go to the transition team for the new megacity that this should be considered very seriously. But we've not seen anything happen. We're not sure what's gone forward. The fact is that the Metro Toronto Reference Library is an incredibly important resource in this province and needs to be maintained and needs to have a separate governance model. That needs to be said.

Let me read to you the editorial that was in the Toronto Star, I think it was May 13, just around when we were doing clause-by-clause on this bill.

**Mr Patten:** My birthday.

**Mr Gravelle:** The birthday of the member for Ottawa Centre and a day when the Toronto Star was concerned about this. The title is "Saving Libraries" and it says:

"The public library system is one of our unifying institutions that is so universally supported that it's taken for granted. Yet under legislation now in its final stages at Queen's Park, the Mike Harris Tories would turn libraries over to municipalities and scrap the last \$18-provincial subsidy." The truth is, it's actually more like \$24 million. "Worse, cities won't be compelled to keep libraries open. If they do, they will be allowed to charge fees for virtually everything except the lending of books.

"In some places, this will have little impact. Wise municipal officials will ensure that no citizen should be charged for using the library. Other cash-strapped municipalities, however, will shut the local library down. Or they will charge user fees.

"Patrons may face new charges to look at a list of vacant affordable apartments, to enrol their children in early-reading programs, to check out a tape or CD; or even to look up where a book is kept on the library shelf. But the biggest and most dangerous potential area for fees is in the area of computerized information. More and more information these days is available only on computer," as the member for Northumberland pointed out.

"In many libraries, the only way to monitor government is through a computer. Most libraries don't get a printed version of the proceedings of the Legislature. In the recent battle over Metro amalgamation, both sides kept track of the debate by computer, figuring out where Bill 103 was in the House, what people said in testimony, and how MPPs voted. Under Bill 109, Ontarians may have to pay to get such information. That's clearly wrong.

"Only about 7.5% of Canadians have access to the Internet at home. The well-to-do will not suffer, but the poor will.

"Libraries help bind our fractious and diverse society, a place where citizens of all incomes and backgrounds have

come together for generations. That unifying factor is what we're about to lose."

It's more and more clear that the concerns about what this bill will mean have been felt across this province. No matter what corner of the province you go to — and in our hearings we went to all corners of the province and we heard the same reactions — there's no question that in some of the smaller communities, in northern and rural communities, there is perhaps even a greater level of concern because I think some of the pressures that are being put on them may come forward earlier than the pressures on some of the larger municipalities.

I cannot stress strongly enough how I believe that all municipalities which have supported their libraries in the past will continue to do everything they can to support them in the future. But the fact is, the realities of these smaller municipalities will make it very, very difficult.

It's also important to note that the percentage of the support that was received from the province is significantly higher in a lot of the smaller communities. In some cases, 50% of the funding comes from provincial support which is being done away with.

As a northern member, as the member for Port Arthur, and proud to be one, I've spoken to a number of people and dealt with many, many thousands of people in terms of this from a northern Ontario perspective. I want to draw reference to many of the letters I've received talking about this threat to library services. I want to quote some of the people who made presentations. Because of time I will have to whip through this but I will do it.

Alan Pepper from the Northern Ontario Library Service, who spoke in Thunder Bay, said, "Overarching those problems which are common to all the public libraries comes the recognition that northern communities are less capable of funding services and that a government mitigation strategy is required."

Angela Meady, a worker in the Thunder Bay Public Library told me: "The library has traditionally worked in tandem with the school system. Public libraries have played an important role in equalizing the educational playing field by providing resources for students of all ages.... As library funding gravitates to mere subsistence level, the library will not be able to maintain the level of service and materials its users require.... The lack of access to information is an obvious impediment to educational and social success."

1710

Marlene Davidson, from the Atikokan Public Library, told me that "eliminating direct operating grants for libraries indicates that the provincial government does not support the economic, social and cultural growth of Ontario. The Atikokan Public Library board is very concerned that this library will no longer be able to be part of the whole networking system and will be unable to partake in the sharing of resources."

That refers specifically to the interlibrary loan system that the minister talked about so proudly, which people will not be able to access as a result of the shrinking resources. Of course, Atikokan I believe was also the com-

munity that had to close down their library for 11 weeks this summer because of the pressures they were under.

Libraries in Beardmore, Geraldton, Longlac and Nakina are also now somewhat worried — with reference to my colleague from Lake Nipigon — about what will become of library services in their communities with the recently imposed decision by this government's municipal restructuring commission to create one single municipality called Greenstone, covering an area of hundreds of square miles.

Elizabeth Russell, from the Atikokan Public Library again, told me: "Please do not think that libraries will be treated fairly in the downloading of costs to municipal councils. In our community, we know what our council will try to do if Bill 109 is passed as it has been proposed. We've already had to fight to keep our library services."

Moe Sheppard of the Steelworkers in Thunder Bay wrote to me recently, talking about how one municipality in this province has already had to make a difficult decision to dedicate scarce resources; in this case it's the purchase of flags I believe, over that of the needs of the public library.

We're already seeing the challenges that are coming forward, and this is before this bill goes through and before the per household grant is absolutely gone.

Joseph Gold, the chair of the Haileybury Public Library in northeastern Ontario, said:

"The removal of provincial funding leaves no such guarantees for the survival of library resources in any community, let alone small municipalities struggling to juggle the merits of snow removal, sanitation, hockey arenas and public libraries. The withdrawal of all provincial responsibility for funding libraries is not only a crippling financial blow, it is a symbolic abdication of leadership and support; a balkanization of services and standards; and an announcement of provincial indifference to the role of literacy, reading, information services and cultural enhancement."

Strong words, but again expressed because of the great concern that the government is not — well, the government does know what this bill is going to do. What's frustrating is that they feel they just can slip this by us. We're not going to let them do that.

Laurie Wright, from the Red Rock Public Library, outlined for me some disturbing trends in library services across northwestern Ontario. I'm going to try to quote her, being very conscious of the time available to me on the clock:

"Libraries are opening for fewer hours each week. This has a serious effect on the quality of library service that is offered. In most cases library usage has greatly increased but the time available to serve the patrons has been decreased. Staff hours have also been reduced. In some cases, cuts have had to be made in the staff numbers. Building maintenance is suffering. Book and general materials budgets have been cut. Longlac Public Library had book budgets as high as \$20,000 in previous years, but now they only have \$7,900 available to spend. Equipment and capital expense purchases are no longer

possible. The services we receive from Ontario Library Services North have decreased in proportion with the reductions in the funding. Funding for professional development has been drastically diminished."

I wish I could read her entire letter, because it was so useful, a strong part of her presentation. In closing, she says:

"I would like to stress that we are resourceful people in northern Ontario. Our concerns are basic and we strive to provide the best service possible with whatever we have. Over the past several years we have trimmed the fat from our operations and now we are very worried that more cutbacks will prohibit our ability to provide even the basic library services."

That's a point that must be made. Libraries, like municipalities, like many other institutions, have been cutting back and trimming the fat for quite some time now, and to have this government simply throw it all away by bringing forward this bill and pretending this bill is going to improve library service is truly astonishing and so, so wrong.

There are some hard facts that need to be known. I'm sorry for my weary sigh, Speaker. It's not over the time; it's just my intensity about this bill, which upsets me so much. There are some issues that need to be known, certainly in terms of the whole question of accountability and governance. Municipal councils already do have line-by-line budget control over the library budgets. Municipalities will have no choice but to make those hard decisions when forced to swallow this government's hard-line dumping of new financial priorities.

The choices might be to streamline operations and remove the participation of library boards. They might hang on for a while and not do it, but they might. It won't happen overnight; we know that. It will not be like a wholesale firing of the library boards or library staff. It may happen in two communities this year, eight communities the next year, and maybe 12 the year after. The point is that the municipalities are going to be put in a position where they are going to have absolutely no choice but to make those decisions.

You could just ask people in the city of Winnipeg or the province of Quebec what library services are like in their city or their province without the participation of duly elected volunteer-majority library boards. The prognosis is not good, and we're reading about these stories constantly. It's important to state the value of the citizen-majority library boards. They are incredible people who dedicate an extraordinary amount of time and energy for their community libraries.

**Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin):** Mr Speaker, on a point of order: I don't believe there is a quorum here to hear the member for Port Arthur.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin):** Would you please check if we have a quorum.

**Clerk Assistant:** A quorum is not present, Speaker.

*The Deputy Speaker ordered the bells rung.*

**Clerk Assistant:** A quorum is now present, Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The member for Port Arthur.

**Mr Gravelle:** I'm glad that more government members have shown up to listen to this, because I think it's very important that they hear this. I'm glad the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale has shown up to hear some of the concerns I have been expressing, because I think they are very legitimate concerns.

We know that there are some major issues and some major concerns that I want to express, and I also want to give my colleague from Dovercourt some more time. As we said earlier, we expect this may be the only sessional day devoted to this, so I may wrap up a little early as a courtesy to him.

We cannot deny the importance of some of the realities in this bill, such as the user fees and the funding issue. We know about the governance issue. We recognize how important it is to maintain citizen-majority boards. We heard from an extraordinary number of people about how important that is. We recognize that the government has changed this so there will be library boards, yes, but they won't be majority boards, because the municipalities may need to make some harsh decisions and they won't necessarily be able to make them if they have citizen-majority boards.

The user fee issue is another one. As I mentioned earlier, the member for Northumberland talked about the new reality without recognizing that part of the new reality is that the government will allow libraries to charge user fees for these services, and the only core service that is protected is for books and printed material to some degree.

The fact is that the user fees will not make up for the loss of provincial funding, that's for sure. Regardless of the fact that there seems to be one library board out there that said they could do that, the overwhelming evidence is that this cannot be done. The fact is that all libraries, regardless of size, will be faced with the reality that most municipal councils will not be able to replace that lost provincial funding, and they won't be able to do it because of the other horrific realities they are facing as a result of downloading.

Libraries like the library in Oliver township will no longer be able to receive funding from the area municipalities to serve the local population. What will happen to small libraries? Some of them will have to close their doors. What will happen to medium-sized libraries? There will be less service, there's no question about that, and some of them may be forced to close their doors. They will close some branches potentially. I think that's simply a reality. There will be less staff and fewer library resources by way of books and materials. They just won't be able to buy as much material. All these things are absolutely going to happen. Large libraries? Again, the support is there but all these things will start happening to them as well.

1720

The truth is that we made an extraordinary effort, particularly during clause-by-clause, to bring provincial accountability into this bill. I'm going to quote the Minister of Culture. This is what she said at the start of the public hearings on April 7. She said, "Certainly we are

open to suggestions and, based upon what those submissions will be, I most certainly will review those with a view to making the draft legislation better." This is the opening of public hearings. "Yes, I think you can take that as being a commitment. We are very fair and we are very reasonable and we will consider the suggestions that are received." The minister went on to say that "there will not be any libraries within Ontario that will suffer" as a result of this bill.

Despite this promise and the assurances, we don't believe the minister. We saw what happened at clause-by-clause. The amendments were not put in place. We put through those amendments one after the other, but one after the other they were defeated by the government majority on the committee.

The fact is that the minister, no matter what happens here, is going to be held responsible. This government will be held responsible, but the minister will be certain to be held responsible. Despite what they want you to believe, they know this is being set up to put the municipalities in a position where they are not going to be able to find the level of support they want. Despite everything else, universal accessibility to libraries, which they actually say is there within their preamble, is not there. It will not be there.

The disappointment and the anger that all of us feel who fought so hard in terms of this piece of legislation cannot be overstated. We are disappointed and we are angry because we truly believe this bill is one that will deny access to a large number of the people in our province to the library system. We also believe it will end up in closing branches, closing libraries. It will make things very difficult. We also believe that by getting rid of the citizen-majority boards, we are going into a situation that a future government will be forced to look at and change.

This is part of a downloading package. There is no question about that. It's very, very important that the members of this Legislature and the people in this province understand that. The fact is, the government wanted to push this bill through quickly.

**Mr Patten:** It's a bully bill.

**Mr Gravelle:** The fact is, it is another one of the bully bills. My colleague from Ottawa Centre called it a bully bill, and it is, because it's one of those bills that literally put the municipalities in a position — the government members are saying, "They want this." They don't want this. They are forced to take it because the government is literally forcing so much on the municipalities they can't afford.

It's hard to overstate the importance and value of libraries in our system, in our province, in our lives. It's probably impossible to overstate the spiritual value of libraries, what libraries mean to people, what they mean to seniors and what they mean to children, how they are the truly democratic place in our communities and how they are literally the community centres in many of our communities across the province. To see a bill like this go forward where the government simply is withdrawing support for the library community and yet is still saying

everything's going to stay in place when they know full well this is not the case is appalling.

It's something that will stay with me, and I want to make a commitment too on behalf of the Liberal Party. We're not going to let this go. Even though we definitely know that this is going to cause extraordinary problems, we're not going to let this go. When provincial responsibility is essentially eliminated, our caucus and myself will be staying with this and watching this. Despite the fact that the minister doesn't want to set up a monitoring process that will actually at least make us understand or see what's happening in the system, we'll do that monitoring process, and we're going to stay in touch with the library community.

We believe extraordinarily in the importance of the public library system. We believe this bill has dramatically and irrevocably hurt the system and will hurt the system in a terrible way. We are grateful for all the support that's been received out there in the province, all across the province, and for the extraordinary fight that's been put up.

No matter what any of those government members say, the facts are there. The facts are that this government is removing itself from accountability for the provincial library system and they absolutely should be ashamed of themselves. I would call on the government to at least not make this the only sessional day, although that's the word we're getting, and to at least recognize that this is a debate that needs to continue, that needs to be heard. More people need to be heard on this issue. I know a lot of my colleagues do. I ask the government, I guess for the last time in the Legislature, to withdraw the bill. Withdraw the bill because this bill is going to hurt an awful lot of people in this province, is going to hurt the library system and ultimately is going to hurt you. The people are not going to forgive you, they are not going to forget what has happened and they're going to know how it came about.

If you want to use the opportunity to withdraw it, I would recommend you do it. We will be here standing in strong opposition to this bill until that opportunity is gone. I hope that all of you on the government side will at least listen to the people in your own communities and have the honesty and the guts to report back when things start going wrong.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Questions or comments?

**Mr Wildman:** I wanted to congratulate my friend from Port Arthur for his remarks. I'm surprised he quit with six minutes to go; there was so much more to say.

*Interjections.*

**Mr Wildman:** Oh, he wanted to share some time with us. That's very nice.

I did want to comment about his remarks, particularly where he talked about the difficulties libraries in northern Ontario are going to face as a result of this change, the fact that they will lose the grants that are very important to make it possible for them to obtain the materials that so many in the community use for recreation and research.

I really regret the fact that the members of the government party seem, in dealing with these issues, to do

two things: first, they continually refer, in talking about northern Ontario, to the librarian from the township of Michipicoten, that is, Wawa, which is in my constituency. I think it's interesting that this individual was the only librarian from northern Ontario who, before the committee, supported your change. Every other librarian opposed it. Why is it, then, that this government only refers to her comments?

The other thing the government members do is that they say: "The members of the opposition and those people who are raising objections don't believe in local autonomy. They don't believe in local municipalities being able to make these decisions properly on behalf of their residents." The member for Port Arthur made it very clear that we are not denigrating the role of local councillors, but we understand the importance of libraries and understand the difficulty they will have in being able to fund those libraries because of the government's downloading.

**Mr Shea:** I appreciated listening to the words from the member for Port Arthur, as he gave his Chicken Little speech. Let me just match his quotations with some other quotations. He may know a person by the name of Councillor Rick Chiarelli. Certainly the member for Ottawa South knows him. I'm sure he'd want to hear this quote from that councillor:

"Then came the new Public Libraries Act of 1984, which gave councils more control over public libraries. Nepean immediately took advantage of the opportunity. The mayor and three senior councillors were added to the library board, which also had five citizen representatives.

"When this happened, there were dire predictions: Library service was going to suffer; control of the library would be wrested from citizens and so on. But what actually happened? The library was revitalized. We do not wish to change the fundamental principle of free public library service acceptable to all, but this need apply only to core services. What are these core services? 'Core' will mean something entirely different for Carleton Place, Goulbourn, Nepean, Vanier and Ottawa."

I refer you also to comments from the London Free Press, part of an editorial: "What will be different and hopefully better under municipal control will be the greater ability of local library boards to make decisions about the course and future of local libraries based on community needs and not provincial dictums."

From CUPE: "This act allows free access to libraries, free in-house use of library resources, free borrowing of printed items and free use of specially formatted materials for disabled patrons." CUPE says, "We are extremely supportive of these four changes."

I can go on with quote after quote. The fact is, this is a bill worth pursuing.

1730

**Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William):** I want to commend my colleague the member for Port Arthur, not only for his remarks today but for the incredible amount of work he has done in making sure that people who are concerned about the future of our public libraries would

have a voice and would have an opportunity to express their concerns about this government's legislation.

The member for High Park-Swansea and all the members of the government caucus would love to be able to cite examples of municipal library relationships that took place in a totally different financial context, before the horrendous offloading that's going to take place on to municipalities with a series of legislation this government is bringing in.

The whole issue here is what is going to happen to libraries in the context of the horrendous offload on to municipalities. I believe the government hoped it could quietly slip this one through as just a small part of that offload. My colleague from Port Arthur has made sure that the government couldn't just let this pass by without it being noticed.

There have been concerns raised across the province about what will happen to the future of our public libraries. My colleague has made sure that people who are concerned about how municipalities were going to cope with the needs and the preservation of public libraries when they're up against roads and sewers and police and fire and child care and social assistance and social housing in communities — how those concerns were going to be addressed — he's made sure that those people in small rural communities, particularly, as my colleague the member for Algoma says, the small northern communities and the fears they have about the survival of their library system and how important it is to those small communities to keep a library, even though it's going to be virtually impossible for them given all the other financial pressures those communities face.

My colleague has also made it very clear that the people who would be affected by the loss of our libraries are those who are the most disadvantaged, not those of us who can buy books to read, buy books for our kids, provide stimulation for our kids, but those from economically disadvantaged homes who need the support of that public library system. This week, we saw that Ontario's students are low in literacy, particularly those students from socio-economic backgrounds. We need to reinvest in libraries and in —

**The Deputy Speaker:** Thank you. The member's time has expired. Further questions or comments?

**Mr Toby Barrett (Norfolk):** I wanted to congratulate the honourable member. He is one of the few speakers who has taken the time to speak for 15 minutes, and actually, I think he stuck to the substance of the bill for the entire 15 minutes. I do congratulate him for that, because he's one of the rare members, and I would echo the member for Fort William's comments that he certainly has done his homework on this issue.

But the whole thought that "Thank goodness there's a provincial government here; thank goodness there's someone in Toronto to come down on Nepean or Scarborough or Thunder Bay or Pickle Lake and tell them what to do; thank goodness there's someone there who will give that wisdom from Toronto" — I can tell you, in my community, in Nepean, as the member for High Park-Swansea

has noted, they put councillors on the board a number of years ago, and if anything, our great library system has got even better. We saw very solid representation from elected councillors bringing their views, and they're accountable to the taxpayers, accountable to the folks who pay the freight. That's been a very positive influence in our community.

The member for High Park-Swansea also noted that Rick Chiarelli, a very prominent councillor in Nepean who even served in a leadership position with that library board, indicated some very positive comments with respect to the bill we're debating today. The Nepean library board was certainly supportive when they appeared before the committee.

The honourable member for High Park-Swansea mentioned that Mr Chiarelli is a Liberal. He's a very prominent Liberal. He's a big supporter of the member for Fort William and a big supporter of the member for Ottawa South and of course is the cousin of Bob Chiarelli, a very good candidate for regional chair in Ottawa-Carleton.

These folks have had a very positive reaction to having elected councillors on the library boards. It brings more accountability, and the jewel of the Nepean public library has been very well served by those people.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The member for Port Arthur has two minutes to respond.

**Mr Gravelle:** I want to thank the member for Algoma and the member for Fort William for their kind comments and support. I want to comment on the remarks made by the member for High Park-Swansea and the member for Nepean. Actually, they have given me an opportunity to make another point that I didn't have time to make.

We talked to a number of groups that had made some remarkable changes in the public library system and did some things that actually were difficult. The member for High Park-Swansea talks about a library board makeup that was shifting. The point is that under the Public Libraries Act of 1984 they were able to do that. The point that was made frequently throughout the hearings was that this act did not need to be changed, that the Public Libraries Act was fine.

The only reason Bill 109 has been brought in is because it's part of the downloading process. There's no question about that. The fact is that the Public Libraries Act of 1984 did not need to be updated. The member for High Park-Swansea will recall this. People came forward and told us how they could make some changes under that particular act, and that is the truth. This bill has come forward because of a need and a necessity, in this government's mind, to shift responsibility, to download it, to dump it on the municipalities. I will go to my grave knowing that's the case.

No matter how you look at it, the fact is that this government is removing support for the library system in this province in every real way. They're removing it by denying universal accessibility, because there's no question about that. The user fees will make sure of that. They're denying it by away the per household grant, which we

tried very much to maintain in some fashion because municipalities will not be able to afford it.

This is a piece of legislation that people across the province are going to look back on and say, "This was a huge mistake. You know why? It's hurt our libraries. It's killed some of our libraries." It's a bad, bad bill.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Further debate?

**Mr Silipo:** I'm glad to have the opportunity to get up even for a short while. I want to thank the member for Port Arthur for leaving a few minutes off his speech, although I had the sense as he was winding up again that he could have used those six minutes he left on the clock.

I want to say a few things from our perspective and mine as a critic for the New Democratic Party on this. I note that this will likely be — of course we don't know for sure, but I think our sense is probably accurate on this — the only day we will have for third reading of this bill. We know the government has tabled the time allocation motion which we understood earlier they were going to call even before having a third reading debate at all on this bill. I think they've since seen the error of their ways, at least to the point of allowing one day of third reading debate, and we will see what happens in terms of whether they will allow more time.

I want to thank, first of all, a couple of my colleagues who have shared some of the responsibilities with me on this: my colleague from Sault Ste Marie, who did a number of the hearings. During the time this bill was in committee, we also had one of the other download bills; the megacity bill was also in process and I was doing my duty on that bill. My colleague from Fort York, with whom I will be happy to share this time, not only cares a lot about this issue but also comes at this from the perspective of having served for some time as a member of a library board.

I want to talk about a couple of the basic principles and issues in this bill on which we have seen no change whatsoever by the government as this bill has gone through second reading and committee and then come back here for third reading, despite the fact that overwhelmingly the people who appeared in front of the committee spoke to the need for those changes to be made.

We heard earlier, when this third reading debate was started, both the minister and the parliamentary assistant talk about the virtues of local control, that this bill, in their view, gives municipalities a great deal of control over what should happen. To some extent, one could not just understand but even have some support for that notion. But when they talk about local control, we know that the only reason this bill is in front of us is because this was part of the machinations they have brought about and part of the deal-making that has gone on with respect to trading off some responsibilities between the province and the municipalities.

We know that many municipalities have been looking for the kind of control over the public library system that this bill gives them. On that sphere, they're quite right. They are giving municipalities those kinds of controls. What they of course won't say is that in doing so, they are

doing it in a way that sacrifices some equally and I would say even more important principles that have guided the governance and the running of our library system, not just for the last 10 or 20 years but in effect for over 100 years.

I want to start with a quote from one of the presentations that was made from the Toronto Public Library board, who put it so succinctly. Mr Rick Goldsmith, the chair of that board, said, "Since the Free Libraries Act of 1882, provincial legislation has guaranteed our proud tradition of citizen involvement in libraries, with citizen volunteers being the majority members on library boards." Since 1882. That's the kind of change that we are seeing from a party that I thought had some respect for tradition, had some respect for the sense of evolution that we've gone through.

1740

I haven't seen, in the process that we've gone through to date, a case being made for the need to remove something that has been working well, and that is the majority of members of library boards being citizens, not politicians. Am I saying that politicians shouldn't be on library boards? Of course not; they should. They are there now and they play a very viable role, but so do the citizen members. Is it a question of trust or mistrusting? I suppose some can put it that way, but I don't come at it that way. I see that we're talking about basic principles here.

If you believe, as the government does, in local control — that is, giving municipalities more say over the running of the library system — fair enough. I may not agree wholeheartedly with that approach and that principle, but I can understand that. But that does not and should not also mean that you throw away an equally important principle, which has been, first of all, to have library boards — and we're glad that's going to stay in the bill — but secondly that on those library boards you have a majority of citizen members. That's something that has existed, as has been noted, not just for 10 or 20 years, but for over 100 years.

That is something that has worked, it's something that should continue to be present, and it's something that I have yet to hear a good, sound reason from the government members, from the minister, the parliamentary assistant or anybody else, as to why in effect that change is being made, why citizen control is being swept away.

Yes, it may very well be that municipalities will still have, under this legislation, the right to have and the ability to have boards with citizen majority if they choose to. But what if they don't? It's not a case of Big Brother or Big Sister from the province looking down on them. It's saying, as we do in many other pieces of legislation, that if we have some basic principles that we believe are important, then those are worthwhile maintaining in legislation and not simply leaving to local fights and local disputes in terms of municipalities and municipal councils deciding what to do on those basic points.

When the minister says that through the hearings there was a consensus that the library boards be retained, she's absolutely right. But she would be more correct, and I think she would be stating the overall summary of the presentations that came before the committee more accu-

rately, if she were also to have added that there was a consensus that library boards be retained with citizen majority on those library boards. That's one of the basic reasons why we find this bill unacceptable, because it destroys something that doesn't need to be destroyed; it changes something that doesn't need to be changed; it takes away something that has existed for years in this province and has worked well.

For a government that comes from a perspective of saying, "You don't fix something until it's broken," I don't understand why this is something they have to break rather than fix. That's what they're doing, except that it was part of the arrangements, the deals that were made with the municipalities, that this would be one of the trades. I can even understand that. I don't agree with it, but I can understand that trade with respect to the dollars in terms of the removal, as the government is doing — which is another reason why we are opposed to this bill, the removal of the provincial interest not in the overall coordination — that will still be there — but the provincial interest by virtue of grants, because grants from the province will no longer flow.

The government justifies that by saying this is part of the trade up and down in terms of the changes in responsibilities, fiscally and otherwise, between the province and the municipalities. Again, I disagree with that. We disagree with that. But that part of it one can at least see the logic of from the government's perspective. But how that comes back to also getting rid of the citizen membership and the citizen majority on the board is not something that's understandable or acceptable to us.

Equally, there is another basic problem that we had with the legislation, and we continue to have it in spades, because what we've seen from the government through the process of committee is an attitude that says, "Yes, we agree," but then when it came right down to having to make the changes, a refusal to take any serious amendments that were put forward by us, or the Liberal caucus for that matter, a refusal to take any of those. That has to do with the notion of the other basic principle that has been at the heart of our public library system, and that is the notion of universal free access to all circulating materials in the library.

The government, I know, will make a lot out of the fact that they are maintaining in regulations the freedom to borrow written materials free of charge. But I want to say again, as I've said throughout and as many presenters have said throughout, that what you are doing here is wrong, for two basic reasons.

First of all, there is now in the Public Libraries Act a basic protection in law, in the legislation — not in the regulations — that gives people, citizens, residents of Ontario, free access to circulating materials. Even when you listen to the minister, there is no reason that has been given as to why that protection that now exists in the law of the province of Ontario is being taken out, because taken out is exactly what is being done.

You know better than I the difference between a piece of legislation and a regulation. What the government is

doing is taking that basic protection, diluting it, and then putting it into regulations. In regulations it can be changed by a simple decision of cabinet, without any notice having to be given to anybody in the public library system, as opposed to the basic protection that exists now in the law of the province of Ontario under the Public Libraries Act that says materials can be borrowed free of charge.

Then of course the second problem is that even in that redefinition, while the minister continues to say, "We recognize that materials today are not just print materials but are also non-print materials through the evolution of technology," we see a refusal to put, even in regulation, let alone in legislation, the basic protection to borrow those materials free of charge also apply to non-print materials.

That leaves us with not only some questions but with some clear sense that what the government is doing is wanting to facilitate the increase of user fees, and there's no two ways about it. I think we could all make the case that there may be some services and some things for which it might be appropriate for libraries to charge a fee, things that are completely outside of the normal sphere of services that every citizen ought to be able to have. But what you've got here is still a refusal to put those basic protections in the legislation. What you've got is still a refusal to recognize in the law that we are being asked to approve today and over the next few days and to put into that piece of legislation the basic protection that says that those materials would continue to be there free of charge and that those materials today have to include not just print materials but also non-print materials.

That is another one of the reasons why we find this bill unacceptable, why we find that the government, as we have gone through the process, while they've tried to pay lip-service, while they've tried to take quotes — I couldn't believe just a few minutes ago hearing my colleague from High Park-Swansea quote, from all places, a CUPE presentation when he knows very well that had he read another couple of lines down in that same presentation he would have heard all of the things that group and many other organizations — whether they represent people who work in the system, people who use the system or people who now are involved in overseeing the system, all of those groups were of one voice in saying to the government: "What you are doing is wrong. What you are doing is breaking something that now is working generally well. What you are doing is putting in jeopardy the future of the public library system."

1750

Will it crumble? Will it disappear completely? No, I don't believe so. I'm not going to stand here and say that if this bill passes the whole library system is going to come to a crashing halt, no, but this legislation will severely hurt the public library system as we know it today. It will mean that if you don't have municipalities that are sensitive to that very important role the public has played — and we're talking here about people volunteering their time; we're not talking about paid positions as members of library boards — unless you have municipalities that are willing to continue that openness and that attitude, we will

see a very good and strong tradition in this province disappear at the hands of a party that supposedly is supportive of tradition. Isn't that interesting?

We will see over a period of time that more and more user fees will be charged, either because public library boards will be under the pressure of less and less funding that they will get from their local councils, which will now be responsible for taking on the full, 100% realm of funding, or because the government itself will be pressured or will give in to pressure or to requests to expand the regulation, which will no longer have to come here in front of the Legislature for further discussion, that regulation which allows for some fees to be charged as of the passage of this bill and which I suspect will allow for more and more fees to be charged for more and more services over the course of time.

Those are some pretty basic changes that we need to care about and reflect on. Quite frankly the government, in its thinking, has shown not one iota of movement in terms of where they've gone on this.

The third issue I want to address is one I am still holding out some hope that the government will come to its senses on, and that has to do with the whole notion of what happens to the one library, and hence the library board that's attached to it, that is really unique in this province. I'm referring to the Metro Toronto Reference Library. As people I'm sure know, while it's situated here in Metropolitan Toronto, that is a library that clearly serves people from across the greater Toronto area and indeed throughout the province. It provides a really useful point of reference.

It's a library that's different from the others. It's a library that has particular needs. It's a library for which a strong case has been made, even as the government moves to amalgamate the other library boards within Metropolitan Toronto in creating the new megacity, as they are intent on doing, for taking the Metro reference library out of that equation and maintaining the existing structure, that is, a separate library board, a distinct library board for that body.

I have to say I was pleased when at the committee, since the government members were not able to support the amendment I had put on behalf of the NDP caucus and a similar amendment that my colleague from Port Arthur had put on behalf of the Liberal caucus that would have retained the Metro Toronto library board as a special library service, distinct from other library boards — the government members, as I say, did not see fit — I could understand. They work, as we know, under particular direction. They did not have the latitude necessary to be able to agree to that, but they did agree to something which I thought was quite significant in the context of how things work around here. That was to send the two amendments that we had put to the transition team that's now looking at the evolution of the megacity, for them to be able to consider this as they prepare recommendations relating to the whole area of transition to the megacity.

I'm going to continue to raise this. I believe there is still some openness; I hope there still is some openness on

the part of the government. I was listening to see if the minister addressed that issue today. I was sorry she did not. I hope, as I say, that she and the parliamentary assistant, who both, not just because they're from Metropolitan Toronto but because they both have an understanding of what they're doing in this bill, regardless of what they choose to say or not say around the myriad of issues that are here — I hope there will still be some room by the minister and the government to move on this.

I don't expect that will be done through Bill 109 because, as I said, I don't expect we will see any more debate on this other than perhaps on the closure motion, whenever the government chooses to call it, but certainly Bill 148 — which is also going through the House and is going to committee now by virtue of the government having decided yesterday that they are also intent on moving rapidly with it — will get to committee, and that's an appropriate place for us to make this amendment and this change.

I hope when we get to that, there is still a willingness there and that translates into something we haven't seen yet on these other important issues that are affected by this bill, which is not just words, but a willingness on the part of the government to actually adopt an amendment. Whether it's taking one of ours or whether they bring their own I don't care. I'm quite prepared to give credit to whoever wants to take it on this, as long as at the end of the day we at the very least have the Metro reference library continue to be governed separately from the rest of the library system.

I want to just say to people who may wonder, "What's the big deal?" you're going to have inside the new megacity, if you proceed with what you are doing now — and again I expect you will with respect to the library system — a new library board for all of the new megacity that will have 108 branches, 108 different public libraries, with a collection totalling 9.5 million items and about 1,900 staff positions that run those various libraries. That's a pretty sizeable entity.

The concerns those libraries have are obviously different than the concerns the Metro reference library has. We saw what happened just last week when as a result of the cuts that the Metro reference library has already had to bear, the library had to shut its doors for part of the year as a way to deal with living within the budget it had been allocated.

That brings me to the last point I want to cover in the few minutes that are left today. That is, what is going to happen on the funding level to the public library system across the province? As I said earlier, am I going to try to paint a doom and gloom scenario? No, I don't want to be unreasonable about this.

The reality is this: When you put what's happening here in the context of the rest of the package this is part of, that is, that as the government is trading up and down — we all know the trade is not an even one — at the end of the day municipalities are going to be squeezed, they're going to have to make some choices about whether they increase property taxes in order to maintain the same level

of services they are providing now or whether they cut some services.

I suspect one of the areas they will look to cut will be in library services. At the end of the day, the fear that people who now work and provide services in libraries have and people who use libraries have is that there will be less in the way of services provided in libraries or there will be more in the way of fees. I think is a very basic, sound fear. It's not unreasonable, in fact it's realistic for them to see that this is what the world of Mike Harris is going to lead to. That's what the Mike Harris revolution is going to mean with respect to the public library system. It's going

to mean that people are going to have less access than they have now, by virtue of things like the Metro reference library had to do, which was to shut its doors for a few days at a time, or they're going to see less in the way of a whole array of other services, or we're going to see more in the way of user fees.

Speaker, I know the time is getting to 6 o'clock. I'll be happy to yield the floor.

**The Deputy Speaker:** It's 6 of the clock and the House stands adjourned until 6:30 of the clock.

*The House adjourned at 1800.*

*Evening sitting reported in volume B.*

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## Legislative Assembly of Ontario

First Session, 36<sup>th</sup> Parliament

## Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Première session, 36<sup>e</sup> législature

# Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

# Journal des débats (Hansard)

Tuesday 9 September 1997

Mardi 9 septembre 1997



Speaker  
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Président  
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

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# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 9 September 1997

# ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 9 septembre 1997

*The House met at 1830.*

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### SERVICES IMPROVEMENT ACT, 1997

#### LOI DE 1997 SUR L'AMÉLIORATION DES SERVICES

Resuming the adjourned debate on the motion for second reading of Bill 152, An Act to improve Services, increase Efficiency and benefit Taxpayers by eliminating Duplication and reallocating Responsibilities between Provincial and Municipal Governments in various areas and to implement other aspects of the Government's "Who Does What" Agenda / Projet de loi 152, Loi visant à améliorer les services, à accroître l'efficacité et à procurer des avantages aux contribuables en éliminant le double emploi et en redistribuant les responsabilités entre le gouvernement provincial et les municipalités dans divers secteurs et visant à mettre en oeuvre d'autres aspects du programme «Qui fait quoi» du gouvernement.

**Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre):** I'm pleased to have an opportunity to speak to Bill 152 because it of course has quite a substantial impact on a number of areas of health care and as the health critic for the NDP I have very, very serious concerns about the effect of those changes.

One of the things this government has heard again and again about the download of services is the way in which it interferes with some of the other major policy directions of the government. That is very true in Bill 152. This government has spent a good deal of its time and energy, and its political capital, on the restructuring of the health care system, and so for it to be making some of the changes it is making in Bill 152, particularly to ambulance services and to the public health services, is really quite a serious error and one we want to bring to the attention of this government.

It is very clear that in taking on the task of trying to restructure the health care system the government has discovered how complex it is. When the minister came to speak to us at estimates, he himself said that when he embarked on this he had no idea it was going to be as difficult as it has appeared to be to make some of the changes, for example, to the primary care system, to the whole way in which we can be sure that every individual

in Ontario has access on a 24-hour-a-day basis to the kind of medical care that's necessary.

I think one of the most important aspects of health care restructuring is the need to provide integrated services, services that fill the full spectrum of needs of the population and that will provide coverage no matter where someone lives or what the circumstances may be that bring them into contact with the health system. Sometimes that will simply be needing a checkup to ensure the person's well. In other cases, it may involve concern around a communicable disease. In other cases, it may be an emergency situation. But the whole purpose of talking about an integrated health system is to be sure that it works as a system and works together.

The one thing I would agree with the Minister of Health on is that very often we today, although we have many services, don't always offer those services in as integrated a way as we should. So it's incumbent on all of us, when we're looking at changes to our current system, that they be positive changes. But when I look at Bill 152 and see some of the changes here, I get very concerned that the government is working against its own goal of providing a restructured and integrated health care system.

Let's look at the whole issue of the download of ambulance services and what that really means. We know that as we close hospitals across this province; as we begin to discover what it means in the rural and northern health care policy to have available urgent care on a 24-hour basis, seven days a week; when we look at the necessity to consolidate into units of excellence some of the services that have been scattered across a number of hospitals and may not have had the body of expertise that comes from doing the same procedure, working in the same area all the time, what we are doing is creating the need for more ambulance services. Some of those will be urgent ambulance services, emergency services, and some will simply be transport services.

What the government is doing at the very time that it is putting pressure on public confidence around ambulance services is to download those on to municipalities, to download at what the minister keeps trying to convince everyone is a cost-neutral basis. But when we look at the increase in a service like ambulance service when these hospitals close, when their services are changed, it is very disturbing because we know there will be a greater need for more ambulance trips simply because of what is happening in the rest of the restructuring process.

As municipalities, we are taking on to the property tax a very growing area of health care, an area that's

absolutely essential if we are to keep people's confidence in the health care system as it reconstitutes itself under restructuring. Every member here who comes from a northern or rural area knows that the really basic concern that people in rural areas have is whether when they have an emergency — a farm accident, a heart attack, a stroke, a respiratory failure, a kidney failure — there is going to be an immediate ambulance response that will get that person to the appropriate location of care for the particular concern.

Because 90% of our ambulance services now are delivered by people who have paramedic training, either level 1 or level 2 paramedic training, we have become used to ambulance services that have well-trained ambulance attendants, well-trained professionals who can assist us when we are in an emergency situation on our way to the hospital facility.

In this bill, there is no requirement for municipalities to continue to provide ambulance services that have paramedical expertise — absolutely none. What is more, as all of us heard here in the House, the minister refuses to even guarantee that the ministry will continue to pay for paramedical training. It currently pays for the paramedical training on the basis that this is something that ought to be available to all Ontarians.

What we are doing in this bill is taking an ambulance service that has tended to work quite well, because of the leadership of the Ministry of Health — because the Ministry of Health has been very much involved in ensuring that whether ambulance services were being offered through public sector or private sector deliverers there was a set of standards that needed to be met and that the training was guaranteed by the government.

When we see a download on to the municipalities and a fragmentation of that system to an even greater extent than is true now — it is somewhat fragmented now because it is offered by different providers in different places — instead of making it a completely unified system, as was suggested by the Swimmer report years ago, so that we could be sure that system was uniform and the standards were uniform across the province, this government has chosen to download on to the municipalities a growingly expensive part of the health care system, with no guarantees around the kind of service that's going to be delivered. They will tell you that it's going to be in the regulations, but the regulations can be changed from time to time.

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When we see the download of an important service like this on to a municipal tax base, at the same time we hear again and again from municipalities that this whole download exercise is going to force them either to raise taxes or to reduce services, we all should be concerned. Ambulance services should not be at the mercy of the taxing power of a municipality. It simply isn't the appropriate way to go for a government that says it's going to guarantee integrated health services. It is foolish to expect that there could be any kind of uniform

expectation about the delivery of ambulance services under those circumstances.

We are extremely concerned that the quality of services is not required, is not mandated by this bill; that the training of ambulance attendants is not mandated by this bill; that the length of time for emergency responses, even within a range, is not mandated by this bill.

When we are in the process of closing emergency departments and closing hospitals, this creates fear in the heart of the citizens of Ontario. We're not creating that fear; it's there already. As soon as a neighbourhood hears that it may not have its local emergency department, fear arises. It's the job of the government to be focusing its energies on making sure that those fears are not there, that they are groundless. Instead of that, this government not only closes emergency departments and hospitals but now it is downloading the responsibility for the very emergency response that could make the difference in public acceptance about hospital restructuring. That's a shame.

The other issue here is that already we are seeing some changes in our ambulance services because the standards are not high enough as it is. In my own municipality, where the local provider of ambulance services has decided to strip a number of ambulances of their emergency function and have them be patient transport vehicles alone, we have on numerous occasions not seen sufficient ambulance coverage for the kind of events that have occurred in our neighbourhood. We have seen waiting times increase for very traumatic incidents on the 401, for example, because the number of ambulances, given this change in service delivery, has created some problems.

We see municipalities that are clear that they are going to be strapped for cash. Given the kind of problems they're facing, they've been very clear about their concerns about their ability to protect essential services at the very time we see this government downloading on to those municipalities the services that are so important to ensuring our health care.

The other issue is the public health units. We have certainly seen, in the fiasco that has occurred in Hamilton around the Plastimet explosion and fire, the importance of having an independent medical officer of health. This government is almost convicted out of the mouths of its own ministers because when the requests for a public inquiry were being made they kept saying, "The medical officer of health doesn't say we need one, so we don't need one." But when the medical officer of health finally agreed that it was necessary to have a public inquiry, this government chose to ignore that.

What do we see happening to public health units in Bill 152? We see some very ominous changes. We see changes that may call into question the independence of medical officers of health. It is particularly of concern that the whole area of the bill in section 7, which amends the duties and the reporting responsibilities of the medical officer of health, changes, or has the potential to change, quite substantially the current role of the medical officer of health.

Medical officers of health are seen as the public servants who are there without the pressures of elected office, without the pressures from the ministry bureaucracy, without the pressures of the CEOs of great big hospitals. They have an independence that allows them to look at the epidemiology of situations; that allows them to look at the overall health promotion and prevention that goes on in the community; that enables them, and in fact under the current act requires them, to have a knowledge of occupational and environmental effects on health; and to be in a very independent position around making orders under their act to ensure the health of the population.

Currently in the act as it is now, subsection 67(1) states, "The medical officer of health of a board of health is the executive officer of the board." That means that the medical officer of health has a clear role to play on the public health board. They have a leadership role, an executive role on that board. Subsection 7(1) of this bill amends that by adding to that sentence "unless exempted by the regulations." What this means is that by regulation the lieutenant-governor in council, the cabinet, of any successive government can make regulations that substantially impact upon the role of the medical officer of health as the executive officer of a public health board.

There are those who might not see this as being particularly urgent, but I will say to you that the public health function of medical officers of health has often been a position that has required the medical officer of health to take very unpopular public decisions, to require municipalities to take actions that municipalities may not wish to take, for the protection of the health of the population of the area. That's the job of the medical officer of health, and if we look at the history of the growth of public health units and the growth of the whole public health movement, we know that's important. Anything that impacts on that possibility is a problem.

Let me just go on with 67(2) of the act. It states, "The employees of and the persons whose services are engaged by a board of health are subject to the direction of and are responsible to the medical officer of health of the board." That's the current act. But this bill, in subsection 7(2) adds "if their duties relate to the delivery of public health programs or services." What does that mean? Does that mean that the public health inspectors, those people who have a lot of contact with people in the field, might not be under the direction of the medical officer of health? We don't know. It isn't clear at all.

Subsection 67(3) of the act currently says, "The medical officer of health of a board of health is responsible to the board of health for the management and administration of the health programs and services and business affairs of the board." Subsection 7(3) of this bill amends that by adding "unless exempted by the regulations." What does that mean? Is the medical officer of health in charge, or is he or she not? Clearly this government is giving itself the power to change substantially the duties, the responsibilities and the accountability of medical officers of health.

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There is section after section in this bill that this government will try to paint to the population of Ontario as innocuous. They will simply say, "Oh, it's all going to be exactly the same; it's just that the municipalities are going to have to pay for it now." What this government forgets is that municipal leaders, locally elected municipal leaders, often have a bit of a conflict of interest when it comes to decisions between areas of public health and areas of economic growth.

We have seen situations in many jurisdictions where the locally elected politicians, eager to bring in business, eager to have the economic growth they envision for their area, may not pay attention to environmental health issues to the same extent we would like to see, and we all know of those. We know, for example, of situations around landfill sites. We know of situations around safety of water and sewage.

Particularly, we have to have some empathy for those people who are going to be in local office with the kind of horrific download this government is doing on to the property tax base, for the crucible of decision-making that is going to have to be there, and we cannot afford to have medical officers of health in any way less independent than they are now. We simply cannot. Nor can we afford to see our ambulance services in that kind of a situation.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson):** Comments or questions?

**Mr Jack Carroll (Chatham-Kent):** It's always a pleasure to rise and comment on the thoughts of the member for London Centre. She made a comment that ambulance service should not be subject to the taxing power of the municipalities. I wonder at this paranoia we seem to have that municipalities will not act responsibly. They are the closest to the people. I have not seen any information since my involvement with municipalities that would suggest that they are not every bit as responsible to the wellbeing of their taxpayers as we are as a provincial government.

London is already experiencing difficulties, as the member for London Centre said. They are experiencing difficulties with their service delivery under the old system, and I read about it in the papers there. I wonder whether, if they were under the new system where the municipality was paying the bill, the municipality, being closer to the people, would be able to step in and solve that particular problem. She's justifying a system that currently does not seem to be working very well in her particular area.

As far as public health goes, she argues that the medical officer of health should continue to be the executive officer of the board. In our community of Chatham-Kent, we are seriously short of doctors. The time of one of our doctors is totally taken up with being the executive officer of the board of health. I maintain that what we need from that doctor, who is trained, is his expertise in medical health for the protection of our taxpayers. We do not need his expertise as an executive, because we could hire an executive to do that same job and free him up to take care

of sick people. I don't see any reason why we shouldn't do as they have done in many regions of our province: allow somebody other than a very precious doctor to serve as the executive officer of the board of health and let that doctor get on with taking care of sick people, which is what we as taxpayers paid to train him to do.

**Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre):** I'd like to comment on the remarks made by the member for London Centre. I think her remarks showed her experience and her wisdom. She wasn't ranting and raving and dumping on the government, but pointing out in conclusive terms very convincing, persuasive arguments that I hadn't considered and that certainly persuade me to rethink and see with a little more insight some of the implications that are not just economic but may have been indeed motivated — and I believe that is the motivation behind this bill, because almost every time you get into looking at the implications, they have programmatic implications, they have service implications. But the chief value that drives this particular bill is obviously economic, dumping services on to the municipalities and cutting corners and providing opportunities for municipalities to cut corners, when we know full well that in spite of their own desire not to do so, they will be pressed to the wall to utilize, will be forced to take some measures that will cut corners.

The member's point related to the independence of the chief medical officer. It's a profoundly serious point, one that has great importance in the dynamics of a local community. I concur with her. Believe me, in my own community I've seen the medical officer stand up when the council was silent and point out that the municipality had to institute a certain program to deal with a health hazard or to deal with some kind of calamity. That's an excellent point and I congratulate the member for her speech.

**Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South):** The member for London Centre approaches this from the very methodical and thought-out process about what this means to our communities. It always strikes me that both in government and in opposition Mrs Boyd, the member for London Centre, has always been quite thoughtful about the comments she makes in this Legislature.

She makes the point well, and the government needs to understand this, that although you may be driven by economic reasons, which we can argue about at another time, to download all these responsibilities on to municipalities — I will talk later in my speech about how I believe it's not strictly the economics that are driving you — it's a fundamental belief that you don't believe in a lot of these public services and you're trying to offload them on to municipalities so they can fail, they can go into crisis and then you can simply get rid of them and have the municipalities do that for you.

The member for London Centre raises quite well some of the issues, the questions that have to be asked. If, for example, in the case of ambulances you were to say the province will no longer deliver ambulance services and we move to download those on to municipalities, how do we assure ourselves that there are provincial standards as to what is required of ambulance operators, in this case the

municipalities? The government will say, "We're trying to do that in legislation." The reality is that if the municipalities haven't got the bucks, they're going to be rattling at the finance minister's door and at the door of the Minister of Health, saying, "We're not going to follow whatever standards you put in place because we haven't got the bucks."

The second point is, what about the level of service? How will the people in Atikokan or Kapuskasing or Timmins compare ambulance services to communities such as London or Windsor or Toronto? There will be no ability on the part of the province to say that there need to be comparable levels of service across the province if you say the municipalities are responsible for not only delivering the service but paying the bill, because the municipalities in the end will say: "We haven't got the money. You've got no business to tell us what to do and we will do what we please."

**Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur):** I want to compliment the member for London Centre on her remarks this evening. She knows what she's talking about, there's no question about that.

I want to focus on the remarks she made related to the downloading of public health on our communities. It's a great concern all across the province. Specifically in Thunder Bay there is one particular program — actually in northern Ontario, because I know the members in Sudbury have expressed concern about this — and that is the genetic counselling services which are now provided fully by the Ministry of Health. These are extraordinarily important services that need to be maintained. With the pressures being put on the municipalities to remove genetic counselling services and the ability to provide them in northern Ontario, it would truly be a dreadful thing.

I've received correspondence and spoken to the medical officer of health for the city of Thunder Bay and Thunder Bay district, Dr David Williams, who has written to me. Heather Lebel, who is the area representative for the Huntington Society of Canada has written to me expressing great concern, and she certainly has family experience in terms of the value of the genetic counselling services, how important they are. Sheleigh McMillan from the Easter Seal Society has added her voice to the concerns and to the need that genetic counselling services must be maintained by the province. It is but one element of the downloading of public health that's causing a great deal of concern.

People don't realize the value and importance of this service and how many areas of health it crosses in terms of preparing people for the future. The technological advances are there.

If I may also note, Ms Linda Spooner, Ms Cathy Gillies and Ms Jan Scheween from the genetic counselling services at the Thunder Bay District Health Unit have expressed their concerns as well.

The downloading of public health is simply wrong. I think everybody recognizes that; I think the minister does as well. In Hansard he actually said he would look after

that, when I was speaking on a previous bill. I hope the minister is true to his word.

**The Acting Speaker:** The member for London Centre has two minutes to respond.

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**Mrs Boyd:** I'd like to thank the members for Chatham-Kent, Ottawa Centre, Cochrane South and Port Arthur for their kind remarks.

One of the most important things we can do when we are debating a bill like this is to try and alert people to the implications that are often hidden within seemingly innocuous language. This is one of those bills that is very important for us to look at carefully, because it has a lot of detail in it, and the devil is indeed in the detail of most of these things. Not only are these little, minor changes that seem to be being made of much greater impact than people suspect, but they also have hidden within them opportunities for other changes, including regulatory change that doesn't need to come to this place and will not necessarily be fully explained to people.

I get the sense all the time that when we are talking about accountability in terms of public services, this government is somehow trying to set us up against municipal councillors. The member for Chatham-Kent tried to suggest that we're casting aspersions on the integrity and the goodwill of municipal council members. That is not the case.

What we are saying is that this government is downloading responsibility after responsibility on to municipalities that are supposed to carry them out on a tax base that is not adequate to do those services, and the services they are downloading are very clearly services where the financial impact is growing with time, not lessening.

**The Acting Speaker:** Further debate?

**Mr Tim Hudak (Niagara South):** I'm pleased to join in the debate this evening on Bill 152. I appreciate in this evening session the very calm tone and the interesting debate on the aspects of the bill and the pros and cons of how we should proceed in terms of municipal restructuring and the direction of health care in Ontario.

I appreciate also the comments of the member for London Centre, who made an interesting presentation. Sitting close to the member for Chatham-Kent, I've grown to very much respect his opinion as well. You see quite a difference in philosophies in terms of how municipalities operate and whether municipalities will adhere to tough provincial standards that we will be maintaining for public health and for ambulance services.

You hear the theme from this side of the floor that municipalities and municipal councillors are very responsive to what their constituents have to say. Sometimes you hear an opposite argument from across the floor, that they will sweep aside the concerns of the residents of their municipalities, their wards, going all out at breakneck speed in favour of big business and expansion. I do not share that opinion.

If you sit on the social implementation committee with Jack Carroll, the member for Chatham-Kent, when he sits there with Terry Mundell, the past president of AMO —

who has taken a very reasonable stance to the approach to this issue, to work with the province in determining how the Who Does What will be best delivered by municipalities and by the provinces — you can see that the municipalities, through AMO, are very keen. I would say very strongly that they will adhere to tough standards to make sure these programs are delivered at the same level as they are today or better. We on that committee have heard a strong commitment from the municipalities to deliver these programs.

Another comment: The term "inside baseball" comes to mind. I've spent a lot of time in this chamber debating, is it proper for this level to pay this much, 80-20, 50-50, 40-60; who enforces the standards; what mechanism will there be to make sure those standards are adhered to; what are the penalties or the reprisals? But in that kind of inside baseball the idea of what the game means or what's going to happen under this exchange of services gets lost for the average taxpayer. It has two important effects. I'll address how the health aspects of the bill fit into those two effects.

For example, one thing that frustrates taxpayers to no end is the idea of finger-pointing. My constituents or the residents of my ward encounter, whether it's a municipal official or a provincial official, the idea of finger-pointing: "It's not my responsibility; it's the province's responsibility. You go talk to your MPP." Then the taxpayer would go to their MPP and their MPP would say: "Listen, the municipality is supposed to do that. You go back to your councillor, to your mayor, to your reeve, what have you. It's their fault."

I know taxpayers find that tremendously frustrating. In the Who Does What framework we're going to go from 12 types of services that fell into that finger-pointing, that were delivered by two levels of government, two levels of management, duplication, and that ability of politicians who wanted to shirk off accountability and responsibility and 12 different services could say: "Go to the other person. It's not my fault; it's somebody else's."

One of the main purposes of this exercise is to make sure that taxpayers, who pay all the bills, whether it's provincial, federal or municipal, will know where the buck stops, who has the responsibility, who has the accountability. That's one of the main premises of this exercise.

The other important thing is breaking down silos, where you may have several different levels of the provincial government delivering different services but not working together. You get the runaround where you call one office and they say: "We don't deliver that program," or that part of that program. "You call the other office." So the poor taxpayer, if they can figure out whether it's provincial or municipal, then has to figure out what department they should be reporting to. I know from dealing with this in my office over the past few years that it can be tremendously frustrating for the average hardworking Ontarian who doesn't have much time to chase after loose ends and make all kinds of phone calls and leave all kinds of voice mail messages.

When you look in particular at the public health aspect of this bill, the public health programs will be delivered at

the municipal level in future. Sure, we're going to have very high, very tough provincial standards to make sure the standards we currently have are adhered to. The municipalities have committed to achieving those standards. They're very confident they can do so. In fact, I think the municipalities will target even higher. They can say, "We can do better than we're doing now if you give us the wherewithal to go about that exercise."

Instead of getting the runaround in terms of the silo issue, we will be delivering at the municipal level programs like social housing together with public health and the administration and management of Ontario Works. In these programs that may affect a lot of the same people in communities across Ontario they can get one-stop shopping. Instead of worrying about the different silos at the provincial level, making those calls to voice mail in Toronto, they can locally, in their communities, with responsible and responsive municipal councillors, get action on their concerns from a variety of programs that can be provided at the same level, instead of getting the run-around.

Ambulances also fit into that. We will be enabling municipalities now to have three types of emergency response. Most municipalities currently do police and firefighting in Ontario. The third component of emergency response obviously is ambulances. Under the changes in this exercise, ambulances will be delivered in concert with police and firefighters to achieve efficiencies, so that they can be called out about the same time, so that they can equally respond to issues, whoever is the best one to respond to a particular dilemma.

It makes a lot of sense in terms of breaking down these silos and enabling municipalities to deliver these services in concert, together, efficiently. Now the local taxpayers are going to know and understand fully where the buck stops, who has accountability for these types of services. They will know they will get the best service for their scarce tax dollars.

That addresses the service aspect of Bill 152, to make sure we get the best service coordinated at the local level and at the same time to end this finger-pointing that's endlessly frustrating local taxpayers, so they know who is responsible for the service, who is paying for it, who is administering it.

1910

While that's being done under that exchange of services, the province, through the Ministry of Health, has a very strong commitment to maintaining the highest possible standards. The standards that currently exist will be enforced at the municipal level. We want to ensure that high-quality care continues.

For example, in terms of ambulances, the province will continue to run the ambulance dispatch centres. In the Niagara area it's very common for an ambulance to cross municipal boundaries in taking people to the hospital where they can receive the best care for their particular ailment. The province will continue to run the dispatch centres to make sure the ambulance that is closest to the individual who is in danger will get there right away, as

quickly as possible, and deliver them to the hospital that can best treat them. Through dispatch, we can ensure the best technology is available to get to the patients as quickly as possible, irrespective of municipal boundaries.

I want to say this too: I reject categorically the idea that a municipality, in the interest of saving a few bucks, is going to perhaps hire a shady operator or do a shady job of delivering ambulance services. I wouldn't enter into that type of debate, because I believe municipal councillors are very responsive and will look out for the average taxpayer and make sure they get the best possible health care.

Some members across the floor insist that municipal councillors are slovenly, aren't that concerned with delivering these services. To enter that debate, to say, "What if they shirked their responsibility for ambulances or they hired a shady operator?" this bill makes it very clear that the Minister of Health retains the ability to go in there if they are not meeting the standards and to make sure those standards are enforced, to put in somebody to deliver those services and to bill back the municipality. There is a very strong commitment coming through in terms of enforcing and monitoring the ambulance services so that standards are adhered to for such things as the vehicles, the different equipment and the qualifications of paramedics.

If the opposition's nightmare happens, to take a little scenario that a municipality decides to ignore the concerns of their constituents and to deliver a shoddy service, the ministry and the province have the ability to go in there and make sure the proper operator is running that service up to the high provincial standards, among the best standards in North America.

We can also talk about the arrangements for public health in a similar vein. I talked earlier about the fact that there is a lot of finger-pointing, different levels of payment. Currently the province pays about 75% and the municipalities 25%, except in Toronto, where it's 40% province, 60% municipality. As I said, what this leads to is a lot of finger-pointing, saying: "We don't control that part of the budget. They're three quarters of a dollar; you should blame them." Or the province could say: "It's their 25 cents on the dollar that they're not coming through with. You should blame the municipality."

By putting it all on one level — the responsibility, the funding —

**Mr Ron Johnson (Brantford):** Accountability.

**Mr Hudak:** — we can ensure that there is, as the member for Brantford says, accountability for the public health services.

Once more, if it so happens in the Chicken Little scenario across the floor that a municipality decides not to deliver a public health program, the province can step in and make sure the program is delivered right away, can react quickly to maintain that strict monitoring function and to continue to enforce the tough standards we have for health care in the province and to respond to the constituents.

Again, my view is that municipal councillors are very responsive, very reactive to what's going on in their com-

munities and in fact will usually hear about things before we do. I try to depend to a large extent on municipal councillors in my riding of Niagara South — in Fort Erie or Port Colborne or Wainfleet — to let me know what they've heard, and we can share information back and forth. I find they tend to be on the ball quite often. A couple of issues coming to the forefront in debates locally in my riding show a quick response of the municipality to what the people are saying.

I have confidence that municipalities will be able to deliver with high, tough provincial standards such things as chronic disease prevention — that means prevention of heart disease, cancer, prevention of injuries, work on infectious disease control, including sexually transmitted diseases, vaccine-preventable diseases and such — and also an area that municipalities are currently delivering and will continue to deliver and now taxpayers will know where to go, if they suggest improvements in that plan: family health, including child health, nutrition, and sexual and reproductive health.

Those programs will adhere to tough, rigorous, province-wide standards, with the ministry watching closely and monitoring to make sure they are adhered to. But my philosophy and the philosophy I often hear on this side of the floor, sometimes shared over there but not as often as I would like to see, is that municipal councillors react and do their best and utmost to respond to the concerns of their constituents and will deliver these programs quite well.

Furthermore, in a couple of areas the province will continue to deliver, as I said, the monitoring of the standards and overall disease surveillance across the province to keep a close eye on what's going on in various municipalities, seeing if there are connections between the two. The expertise that the ministry has developed in these areas can be used in consultation or in support of the municipalities as we're going through this transition process.

Furthermore, some time ago we announced, for example, the immunization for pneumococcal disease. We'll continue to provide vaccines for immunization programs. As well there was the recent announcement in the budget, Healthy Babies, Healthy Children, another program that we're standing by and that will continue to be provided at the provincial level.

I have to say again that sometimes we get caught in that debate in terms of the "inside baseball" arguments and what this means for the average taxpayer out there is that now they are going to know where the buck stops. I've used that expression a few times and I'll use it once more. They'll know whether to go to their municipal councillor if they have a particular concern about a program or a suggestion for improving it, or just a question. They'll know for what services to go to their provincial representative. Then they can stand there, and if there's somebody who tires to shirk his or her responsibility by saying, "It's the other guy, not me. Don't blame me, it's somebody else," they can call him on the spot and say no.

The provincial government under Mike Harris has aligned the services so that accountability will exist in the

future, so that I as a taxpayer will know who is responsible for delivering what type of service. I know if somebody gives me that line, "It's the other guy's fault," or, "Go see him," I'll be able to call them on the spot and say: "No, you're responsible. I put you in office. You're the one who has accountability for this project." This makes government make sense for once.

I can say with confidence that the municipalities will be able to deliver ambulance services in conjunction with the other emergency departments, fire and police, for a high-quality emergency response. Secondly, in terms of the public health standards, the province will be keeping a close eye on the municipalities to make sure they adhere to these standards.

But in the discussions in the implementation committees, in the discussions with AMO, the municipalities rejected strongly and categorically any indication or suggestion that they would try to back away from the standards. They believe in tough standards, they feel they can reach those standards and, importantly, they believe they can reach those standards efficiently, at good value to the taxpayer, and they're ready to take accountability for those services.

I should speak too, while I have a couple of moments, of some of the progress we've made in health care in this bill and in other areas of health care policy. I think we'll have a better ambulance system in terms of integrating that with other emergency responses while maintaining dispatch at the provincial level. I think you're seeing some results from health care restructuring in Ontario. Yes, we inherited a system where 9,000 beds had been closed across the province, but closed haphazardly. You could walk through many hospitals throughout Ontario and find empty wards with dust in the halls, and tumbleweeds and such, but you would still have the same level of administration in place, you would still have the six-figure administrators and their army of support staff running that hospital.

Often you'd find there was a competition in the health care system instead of cooperation, where they would compete for a particular type of machine. Some would raise one half of the value, another hospital would raise the other half, not enough would. They would not come together and cooperate so they could each share one machine, but instead compete and find no MRIs, for example, in that area. On the topic of MRIs, you probably know that we've increased the number of MRIs, in fact tripled them, to 35.

#### 1920

In terms of rationalizing, bringing hospitals together, restructuring to take out that dead space, the empty wards, the empty beds, to cut down on some of the six-figure administrative salaries, we put them back into front-line services, things like 35 MRI machines, increased home care services for 80,000 people.

I remember one of the first things in office as the new MPP for Niagara South: A gentleman in my riding came to me because under the health care system of the previous government — not to cast aspersions — he couldn't get a

heart operation, a cardiac surgery in Ontario. He could, but he'd have to wait months and months. What he chose to do was he went to the States. They found he was in a very difficult and very precarious, dangerous position and he got the operation done there. Luckily, he lived near the border. He was able to access those services at that time, but can you imagine what it was like to live for months on a waiting list with that kind of ticker in your heart, wondering when that time bomb would go off?

One of the reinvestments we've made by savings in administration and bringing hospitals together and getting those excess empty wards out of the system has been 1,500 more cardiac surgeries in a year, so 1,500 more constituents like this gentleman, instead of having to wait for the time bomb in one's heart or having to go to another country for services, could get that health care in Ontario.

Yes, we've made some changes in health care, but at the same time, as the member for Brantford said, we're seeing some progress. Cardiac care is one; kidney dialysis is another; more money into home care, MRI machines, women's health care; more into breast cancer detection, research and prevention.

You're seeing a government that has its priorities straight in health care, a government that's courageous enough to make the necessary changes that were left on the back burner for far too long, a government that's not afraid to make change, but change that makes sense, priorities that make sense, to give key services needed for so long.

Acquired brain injury is another one. Bringing those patients who were in the States back home to Niagara makes sense. It's great for Ontario.

**The Acting Speaker:** Comments and questions?

**Mr Patten:** Let me congratulate the member for Niagara South. I think he's one of the few government members who has utilized the full time available. If you'll recall, one of the great concerns in dealing with the rule changes in this House had to do with, "We want to be heard. We want our constituents to know that we're speaking up on issues," yet you're one of the few members from the government side who has utilized the full amount of time.

Now let's talk about the content. I would take no exception to your idea that the provincial government will be tough in terms of its standards, its regulations. Some people would say that it's really a thirst for centralizing power and control but not accepting the accountabilities related to the resources required to do the job at current program quality levels. That's what is the big concern of all.

You said that this side doesn't have the same kind of respect as you might for municipalities. I don't think that's the issue at all. We have the same respect for people at the municipal level who are concerned. What I hear is that they have major concerns. They will be facing service cutbacks because they're going to be squeezed into a corner. They won't have the same resources, so it's not just saying, "Here's the program." You're saying: "Here's the program, but you have less resources. We are now

taking away resources and money we used to put with this program. It's in you bailiwick. It's in your area of responsibility." That's what they're saying.

You said this legislation was, in good part, in response to Who Does What, and that's true in some aspects, but I would remind you that David Crombie came back from a holiday or a trip out of town and spoke quite eloquently and vehemently about not taking social housing and placing that on property tax. It didn't make sense. If you're going to do that, leave it as it is right now.

**Mr Bisson:** It was a truly interesting presentation that the member for Niagara South gave; truly interesting. He makes a couple of arguments. He argues that the taxpayers, the citizens of this province, are not able to figure out who does what when it comes to the delivery of services within municipalities or the province. He talks about it's like inside baseball kind of language.

Listen, I've got a lot more confidence in the taxpayers of this province to be able to figure out who in the end pays for a particular service. If they live in a municipality, wherever it be, in Ontario, I think that most citizens of this province are intelligent enough to figure it out. For you to suggest otherwise shows that you don't have a lot of respect for the citizens in this province and their ability to figure out what it is that governments do. I find that quite a strange argument.

The other argument he puts forward, and he talked about it with a certain amount of pride, is that he had a constituent in his riding because he lives in Niagara next to the States who had a bad ticker, as he put it, and he fixed his problem. He went to the States and he paid and he got his problem fixed. If you think that Ontarians in this province, first, can afford to do that and, second, would even think of doing that, you're very much wrong. First of all, most Ontarians couldn't afford to pay the \$50,000 to \$100,000 that it would cost to get bypass surgery done in the United States, nor should we, quite frankly, as a province even suggest that that is a reasonable remedy for the problem.

The waiting lists have been increasing steadily because there are more and more problems within our society as people are living longer and longer and needing bypass surgery, but your government has fallen quite short in being able to reduce waiting lists. We're seeing waiting lists in northeastern Ontario rise to the point that people are literally dying before they get in for bypass surgery. For the member opposite to try to suggest that somehow you've made this better I think is at best a stretch of the imagination.

**Mr Bill Grimmett (Muskoka-Georgian Bay):** I would like to comment on the speech made by the fine young member from Niagara South, who has always impressed me with his dedication. I think he brings a bright perspective. I also think he's refreshing in that he's one of the few members here who actually provides a sincere speech when he stands. It isn't just a matter of rhetoric, but he dealt quite sincerely with the issues in Bill 152, particularly the issue of accountability.

I think it was accountability more than anything that the member for Niagara South was talking about when he talked about the specifics of some of the particular services that are being shared currently and that there is considerable confusion. I certainly take the view there is considerable confusion on the part of the taxpayer as to what level of government is responsible and which politician is accountable for the service if it's not being provided properly. It's very common for constituents to come and see me in my constituency office and not know that they're dealing with a federal matter or with a municipal matter. I think part of our job is to point out to them who is responsible for the service and part of our job also is to try and help the person, even if the responsibility doesn't necessarily fall on our shoulders.

In the comments that the member for Niagara South made I particularly thought it was important for him to deal with the finger-pointing and the attempt that Bill 152 is trying to make to bring an end to the finger-pointing so that there is a simpler exchange of the services between the local level and the provincial level. Particularly in his comments about the ambulance service and the way that the provincial interest in that service would be dealt with, I thought he dealt with that very plainly and in a way that people can understand.

I want to congratulate the member for a very clear speech.

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** I'm shocked and surprised that the member would not be aware of the regional municipality of Niagara, which has probably on its council a majority of Conservatives who have indicated clearly that there will be millions of dollars in terms of money which must be made up as a result of the downloading exercise. Of course those people will then be forced into the position not of being the happy warriors who can hand money over to the wealthiest people in the province by means of a provincial income tax cut, but they will have to break the bad news that there's going to be a substantial increase in property taxes or that there are going to have to be even more drastic cutbacks in services. We recognize rich people usually don't need those services, but modest-income people do.

Alternatively, there are going to have to be user fees imposed, and when those user fees are imposed, once again the wealthiest people in our society can afford them, but it denies others the opportunity. If you're among the wealthiest and most privileged, then you might well like this downloading exercise. I suggest that the regional municipality of Niagara doesn't and that all the treasurers of the various municipalities aren't lying to us when they say it's going to have a drastic impact on their budgets.

1930

In addition to this, I think the member mentioned the health care situation in Niagara. He would know that as a result of his government's pronouncements and withdrawal of funds from hospital funding, the Port Colborne hospital, the Fort Erie hospital, the West Lincoln Memorial in Grimsby, the Hotel Dieu in St Catharines and the Niagara-on-the-Lake hospital are all either going to close

or be drastically changed, despite the fact that the Premier assured everybody in the leaders' debate, when he said, "Certainly I can guarantee you, Robert Fisher, it is not my plan to close hospitals." I don't think the member should be an apologist for this. I think he should be out there fighting that policy rather than apologizing for that policy to the people of this province.

**The Acting Speaker:** The member for Niagara South has two minutes to respond.

**Mr Hudak:** Just quickly, the member for St Catharines knows full well that the recently released rural and northern health care framework addresses the needs of the small communities in the riding that I represent, a guaranteed 24-hour access to emergency services, at the very least; a very strong response from the Ministry of Health that looks out for rural health care. Importantly, too, the member for St Catharines often brings out the image of the rich versus the poor, which suits him because he can use it in any debate without having to read the contents of the bill.

Let's face the facts. The rich can look out for themselves. The rich don't have to worry about what level of government delivers what. If there's a complication, they can hire a rich lawyer or a consultant to take care of it for them. This bill looks out for the hardworking, middle-class Ontarians who are tired of their tax dollars going hither and thither and not having any accountability. They're tired of getting the runaround from municipal politicians. This is all about serving the hardworking middle class and those who are moving up the income ladder to make sure that those scarce dollars that they are giving up, pumping gas and giving up half of their paycheques in taxes — they want their money's worth. I say to the member for St Catharines, that's what this is all about. You like to bring out that particular chimera, but I don't think it fits here. It's for the middle class in Ontario.

The member for Cochrane South shows once again — maybe I'll speak to him more directly — that he wasn't listening to my remarks. The gentleman who had to have the heart surgery in the States just after they were kicked out of office — my entire point was I don't expect they will go to the States for their services. That's why we're making the courageous changes, the brave changes in health care to make sure that 1,500 more operations for cardiac care, more cardiac stents, a Cardiac Care Network, so my constituents can get their health care in Ontario instead of the USA like under your government.

**The Acting Speaker:** Further debate?

**Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William):** I appreciate the opportunity to participate in this debate, particularly because too few of my colleagues will have that opportunity with the limitations that are constantly being put on debating legislation in this place. But I regret that we have yet another bad piece of legislation before us.

I happen to believe that this government itself is going to come to regret this particular piece of legislation. This is another bill, another set of initiatives that they rushed into in a hurry to get on with their political agenda, rushing into mega-week, having absolutely no idea how any of

this was going to work. I think they thought they could save \$1 billion and thought just maybe the municipalities wouldn't notice if they did it quickly enough. Now they are left with a piece of legislation, having no idea of the costs or the consequences or the impact, and I believe they are going to come to regret that.

We have a bill that's called An Act to improve Services, increase Efficiency and benefit Taxpayers by eliminating Duplication and reallocating Responsibilities between Provincial and Municipal Governments in various areas and to implement other aspects of the Government's "Who Does What" Agenda.

This government loves to try and cloak the issue with long and fancy titles, but there is one basic bottom line to what this bill is all about and it has nothing really to do with Who Does What. This government's bill is all about who pays for what. The government would love to be able to talk about this bill as sorting out the duplication and administration of services, talking about eliminating duplication. I did notice as I listened to the speech from the member for Niagara South that he talked about getting rid of silos. Was that the part? No, this was the part about the accountability, that the taxpayers wanted to know where the buck stopped so that they would know exactly who was responsible for what.

I think there's truth to that. Unfortunately, the member for Niagara South and virtually all of his colleagues who use that same speaking note have missed the basic point of disentanglement. The basic point of disentanglement, the whole idea of disentanglement, was that you match the responsibility of delivering the service with the responsibility for paying the bill. If you take that as your basic principle, in this respect this government is hopelessly re-entangling in a way that is absolutely mindboggling.

I don't know how much time there is to go over the details of the legislation. Let me just take child care as an example. I think each of the Conservative members who speaks on the bill wants to assure us all that they are going to continue to set standards in the area of social policy, so when it comes to child care they're going to set standards and then there will be mandatory financial participation on the part of the municipalities. So much for matching the cost with who is responsible for delivering the program.

I don't actually believe that the responsibility for child care made mandatory for municipalities is going to be very onerous because I don't think, unfortunately, that this government's going to put a whole lot of money into child care. But there's no question that it is again entangling the government in setting standards and prescribing programs and then requiring the municipalities to pay for the provincially set programs.

The member for Niagara South did talk about silos and I thought there was some inconsistency between a clarity about where the buck stops and getting rid of silos, which seems to me to suggest that there would be more overlap and that there would need to be cooperation, and I agree that there needs to be cooperation. I do find it a little bit strange, though, that anybody would talk about cooperation related to a piece of legislation which was dumped on

municipalities, where the municipalities are supposed to be the ones that are encouraged to be more cooperative and the municipalities were not consulted, they were not given accurate information and they certainly did not see this as a cooperative process. They had to practically beg to have any of their concerns considered before there could be any reasonable semblance of negotiation.

One of the ones that troubles me most in terms of the total violation of the principles of disentanglement is the issue of social housing, because the government has no idea how to make this transfer of social housing work. They don't even know what social housing is going to cost the municipalities because they don't know what it's costing themselves. On January 1, 1998, they're not going to bother with disentanglement or any of that complexity. They're simply going to send the municipalities a bill for the province's social housing costs. If that isn't a reversal of the principle of disentanglement — remember the principle: the level of government that provides the service pays the bill. In this case, the level of government that provides the service and ran up the debt is just going to send a bill to the municipalities.

After that they're going to dump the whole responsibility for social housing on to the municipalities, along, of course, with the liability of uncared-for buildings. Sadly, this next step, social housing being totally transferred to municipalities, delivery of programs, setting the standards for the programs and paying the bill, is more truly along the lines of disentanglement. The unfortunate part of it is, the reason I say "sadly," is that it is entirely the wrong direction, because it is an abdication of the responsibility for providing social programs and that has always been considered to be fundamentally a provincial responsibility, a provincial responsibility to provide for that equity that has to be separated from a property tax base so that in the areas of social programs, in the area of quality of life for people in our communities, the province accepts a responsibility for taking that non-property tax base to ensure that there is some truly equal opportunity. This government is walking away, abdicating that kind of responsibility, and that again is a true violation of the principles and the whole purpose of the efforts that have been made at disentanglement.

The question is who should pay, then, for the programs that are delivered to citizens throughout our province and at the municipal level. Disentanglement has been talked about for some long time. Let me not ignore that fact. The principle has always been that the property tax to as great a degree as possible should be used to pay for hard services, immediate services, for the people in that community and that the province would assume the responsibility for social services.

This government was prepared to move so far away from this principle that in their original proposals they were going to offload costs of long-term care on to the municipalities, but here again it was not going to be a disentanglement. In fact, it was going to be entangled to such an extent that the province would deliver the programs through an arm's-length government-appointed

agency, levy a bill on the municipalities, collect the money and pool it, which is about as far away from disentangling as one can imagine. That's why everybody who has worked on the issue of disentanglement was horrified that this whole government's approach was to put more social programs on to municipalities rather than less.

1940

My colleague from Ottawa Centre has already talked this evening about David Crombie, who was appointed by the government to head up the Who Does What panel, who said, "Don't do this." He said if the price of taking educational taxes off the property tax base, which in the ideal everyone would like to see achieved to as great an extent as possible, but if the price of that is going to be to put even more social programs on to the municipalities, David Crombie said, "Please don't do it." They went ahead and they did it. When it comes to the education tax, we've actually ended up with the worst of all possible worlds.

The government is going to control the educational financing. They are, however, going to continue to tax property for the purposes of education. They're going to tax residential property at 50% of what they now collect. Now, I can't quite describe how the province is going to do this, because the province doesn't know. The province now has an A scenario and a B scenario.

If they use the A scenario, then every municipality will pay 50% of what they are now paying in residential taxes for education. That hardly seems equitable. Since some communities have seen education as a priority, they've raised taxes for it; other communities perhaps have not been prepared to do that. Those that weren't prepared to pay taxes for education before will now benefit from the pooling of the taxes that the province is going to collect at the same rate of tax that was being levied before. It seems complicated. It seems terribly inequitable. So the province has another simpler method, and that's to impose a flat rate of taxation on all properties all across the province. That will be seen to be equally inequitable, not taking into account the true assessment bases of each municipality.

The problem is, the province of Ontario should not be getting into the direct taxation of property, and they had to get into that because they were so desperate to find a way to retrieve the mess that they had created when they first launched this downloading initiative.

Business, of course, will continue to pay 100% of what they have paid in the past for education in their property tax. They are going to pay that plus their share of the new downloaded costs on to the municipalities. The province would like to say, "Oh well, don't worry about that, business, because we've given you a break. We've taken the business occupancy tax off."

It won't be a break for business because you know the municipalities are going to have to increase their revenue to recover what they have lost from the business occupancy tax, because that wasn't the province's money to give away. That money belonged to the municipalities. It is easy for the government to give breaks using somebody else's money. It's the same thing that's going to happen in

rural municipalities when they are going to have to find ways to recover the revenue that they've lost by having to pick up the costs of the generous farm tax rebate that the province has dumped on them.

I regret the fact that we're going through so much of this because of a political agenda on the part of this government that really wanted to get control of the costs of education, and as education critic for our caucus, I'm going to speak to that particularly, because there's no question in my mind that the primary goal of the government was to get hold of the education costs so that they could take \$1.3 billion, as the Minister of Finance has said, out of education to help to pay for the tax cut.

They also thought that it would work well for them, and that's why they started off with the education announcement as the first, the Monday announcement of megaweek, when they did all of the offloading initiatives. They said: "We've got a good political message here. We're going to get," and I quote, "control of the education costs. We're going to get our \$1.3 billion for our tax cut and we're going to be able to say to people: 'We took education off the property tax. Isn't that what we always wanted?'" In fact, they didn't take education off the property tax and they've dumped a whole lot more on that property tax base besides, for a net loss, at current count, of some \$667 million dumped on to the municipalities.

There is not time to go over all of the details of this yet-again omnibus piece of legislation. Just one of the bottom-line questions is what is actually going to be paid by whom at this moment in time as we understand the numbers. No one out there, no municipality, believes that this is going to be revenue-neutral, in spite of the pinkie promise made by the Premier, the kind of promise that a five-year-old would make, that nobody is going to believe because they understand out there, the municipalities, the complexities and the impossibilities of what this government wants to do.

I mean, we're seeing the figures. We're seeing figures in my home community of Thunder Bay. Under scenario A, they would lose \$19 million; under scenario B, they'd lose \$21 million. It goes on for every community: \$584 million lost, of course, for Toronto, unless it's \$603 million; \$12.6 million lost for Nipissing district; \$20 million lost for Algoma district.

Now I agree, and I'm sure the members opposite will challenge, that those figures are not accurate. Well, they're ministry figures, and I don't think they are accurate because I don't think the ministry has up-to-date costs. There was an element of — can I use the word "deception," Mr Speaker? I guess that's an appropriate word; that's a parliamentary word — deception when the government first brought out its figures and suggested this would be revenue-neutral, when in fact they did not include in their calculations any of the costs of social housing. Have you had second thoughts belatedly, Mr Speaker?

**The Acting Speaker:** You asked about the word "deception," and I'm saying that no, it's not acceptable.

**Mrs McLeod:** I withdraw "deception" and suggest that it was just plain inadvertent misrepresentation to the public when they suggested that it was revenue-neutral but failed to include social housing. Mr Speaker, rather than lose time, I'll withdraw. Since the member for Mississauga South is going to request that, I'll withdraw. The point is made.

The ministry put out these figures, suggested it was revenue-neutral and did not include, by their own admission, the cost for social housing of about \$1 billion, or the cost for roads, because they hadn't figured out how many roads they were going to dump on to the municipalities at that point in time. They still acknowledge, in their most recent submissions to the municipalities, that these figures are estimates only. If you want to suggest they're inaccurate figures, blame a government that has no idea of what it is doing to the municipalities.

The Premier and others have said that this is not going to result in new taxes. The municipalities are being told, "All you have to do is find 2% worth of efficiencies, and then you won't have to have any increase in your property taxes." Well, that means cuts. Let's not play games with those words. Efficiencies means cuts. The only way to avoid an increase in property taxes is going to be to cut the programs that this government is offloading on to municipalities, and you wonder why should municipalities have to cut the programs that the provincial government is supposed to be responsible for in order that the provincial government can save money to provide their tax cut promise.

I believe that municipalities and taxpayers deserve a serious effort at disentanglement. I happen to believe that some of the statements being made by the members of the government about accountability, about clarity for the taxpayers, about understanding who is truly responsible for what, that those are important issues and they deserved serious consideration and not this messy piece of legislation, this costly piece of legislation, we have before us.

I know that there are at least three studies that have been done on the issue of disentanglement, long before the Conservatives came into power. As I said, this issue has been going on for some time. Each of those three studies said categorically that the place to start disentanglement was with social assistance, that the province should assume 100% of the cost of social assistance because it was a provincial program with the costs beyond the control of municipalities.

Well, this government has not even done that one thing that every study on disentanglement recommended as the starting point. In fact, they have given municipalities even more responsibility for social assistance; the costs of administration, which the municipalities now have to share 50%, and increased costs of the assistance program itself. I don't pretend that even this step, taking 100% of the costs of social assistance on to the provincial tax base, would have been easy to do. Past efforts at disentangling to that extent have fallen down because, for example, of the unequal costs of expecting municipalities to pick up the costs of roads.

I'm a northerner. I know how northern municipalities feel about their ability to maintain large numbers, kilometres, of roads when there are few people in a small assessment base. Previous governments have tried to find something that might actually be fair. This government didn't worry about that; all they did was not only dump the road costs on to municipalities but a whole lot of provincial highway responsibilities as well. Fairness, equity from municipality to municipality, hasn't even figured into this government's considerations at this point, and even though they were prepared to dump all the road costs and the provincial highway costs and a whole lot else on to the municipalities, this government couldn't take 100% of the social assistance costs unto itself.

There is so much else that they are dumping. My colleague this afternoon spoke about the offloading of costs of libraries, what that may be doing to public libraries. It's a part of a different bill, we debated it this afternoon, but it's part of this same downloading initiative. I haven't spoken about the offloading of the transit costs on to municipalities, and the concern of the disabled community as to what will happen to disabled transit. I haven't had a chance yet to speak about public health, which so many of my colleagues have spoken about.

I just heard on the news at 6 o'clock the medical officer of health for Toronto, Dr McKeown, talking about his very serious concerns about how the issues of public health, the issues of sexual health, genetic counselling are going to be met in a city the size of Toronto, and I know that concern is echoed in every community across the province, certainly including my home community of Thunder Bay. We have had many communications with our medical officer of health, Dr Williams, on this very subject.

#### 1950

I know, as we start to look at the social housing offload, that in my own home community of Thunder Bay there are some 1,600 people waiting to get into affordable housing. The majority of those people are seniors and I don't know how our municipality is even going to begin to meet the costs of that. That's an uncoded liability, an uncoded need being dumped on to municipalities. That isn't even part of the \$1 billion of costs that the province knows it is offloading on to municipalities with social housing.

I am appalled, shocked — those are words that ministers of the government like to use. I like to use them too when I see the sheer incompetence of government in having presented this initiative in the way they have. They didn't know the cost. They didn't take into consideration the cost of social housing because they didn't know what it was. They didn't take into consideration the cost of offloading provincial highways because they didn't know how many kilometres of highways they were going to dump. But they still went out and they said, "Don't worry, it'll be revenue-neutral."

It took a task force chaired by my colleague Mr Gerry Phillips from Scarborough-Agincourt to go out across the province and talk to municipalities and say, "What are

your costs in this area?" and he came back and said: "Government, this isn't revenue-neutral. There's a \$1.2-billion net loss to municipalities." The figures that he was able to produce, far more accurate than anything the government had offered or perhaps anything the government chose to offer, at least forced the government to back-track a little bit, to at least back away from that horrendous offload of long-term care on to the municipal backs.

The government, having taken its giant step in mega-week, in its determination to be able to get control of education costs and do whatever it took, pay whatever price it took in order to get control of the educational dollars, wasn't prepared to back away from that political agenda so they're forging ahead with this poorly-thought-out initiative.

The Minister of Municipal Affairs said to municipalities, "Don't try and dump the blame for this back on us because it will not work." I think the municipalities will have news for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and for the Mike Harris government because they know exactly what has happened. The municipalities know the kinds of challenges that they are going to face. They know what the real costs are. They will know what the needs are. This isn't a question of whether you trust municipalities. They know the concerns, they will hear the concerns, they will be in an absolutely impossible position. They will know who is responsible when the taxes go up or the programs are cut and the responsibility will squarely lie where the buck stops with the Conservative Mike Harris government.

**The Acting Speaker:** Comments and questions?

**Mr Bisson:** I think the member for Fort William raises yet another point in this debate about why it is that members should not be supporting this legislation. Simply put, this whole cavalier approach of this government when it comes to this downloading exercise is really analogous to shooting first and asking questions later.

This government is basically saying — and you've got to remember, they're the ones that are trying to pride themselves on being the great fiscal managers and the great managers of government services. They've got a crystal ball, they understand everything, they do everything so well. But in case after case after case in this downloading exercise, we're really finding out they have an ideological belief of what they want to do. Yes, they take some actions, but in the end they really don't think through how they're going to manage the change and how they're going to get their goals achieved.

A good example of this, as the former leader of the Liberal Party raised, is this cut that they've done to public health units. The government has said: "There's a quick way to cut some money. Snip, snip. We cut some budgets off the public health unit, we make sure that municipalities take on the entire responsibility. That fits well with this Who Does What exercise." But they don't stop.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Bisson:** It's that confusing and I'm doing this on purpose. The point is that they go through this real convoluted process that doesn't really make a lot of sense

about what it is that they're doing, but they don't think about what the consequences are.

One consequence in my community, as it is in most northern communities, is that by doing that cut to the public health units, we're losing the genetics programs in northern Ontario. It means that people in northern Ontario, after this download cut, because municipalities have already indicated they don't want to pay for this service, will not be able to get any kind of testing done when it comes to the kind of testing that genetics do in regard to everything from prenatal examinations to leukaemia testing and will have to come down to Toronto to get it done. So you really wonder what's the common sense in the approach that this government is taking. It's utter foolishness.

**Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East):** I won't be as fulsome in my praise for the member for Fort William's comments as my colleague opposite, because I don't think Liberals have any credibility when it comes to the transferring of services, particularly not social housing. At the same time as her colleagues in Ottawa have already signed contracts with two provinces and one of the territories to download all federal interest in housing, while giving them, quite frankly, not nearly enough money to meet the existing obligation the federal government was maintaining, and at the same time gave those provinces the express right to transfer their housing to their municipalities, to suggest somehow that we're the villains in this exercise is quite incredible.

The member spent a considerable amount of time suggesting that Mr Crombie's panel had looked at the subject of social housing. Well, we can't use the words that describe what that member opposite did, because there is not one word mentioned of social housing in any of the correspondence from Mr Crombie's panel, not one word. They did not pass judgement on that issue at all. They talked about welfare and they talked about public health and they talked about all the other services, but they said it's up to the province and the federal government to sort out social housing. Mr Crombie's panel did not pass judgement, and you might wish to reflect on your comments and perhaps retract the suggestion that they did.

The bottom line, again, from the member opposite is we hear words like "downloading" and "offloading." The truth of the matter is there is a transfer of services proposed by this bill: a dollar-for-dollar transfer. To suggest there will be new costs to municipalities is utter bunk. The bottom line is we are taking \$2.5 billion worth of education costs, a social cost, off the taxpayers, off the property tax rolls, and we are transferring \$2.5 billion of other services. That's the truth.

**Mr Gravelle:** I certainly want to compliment the member for Fort William on her remarks. I think it's a reflection of the new reality of the rule changes that there were so many issues that the member for Fort William wished to discuss. She got in a remarkable number in 20 minutes but could barely touch the surface of some of them. I want to make some reference, if I may, further to the whole question of downloading of public health.

I spoke earlier about the genetic counselling program, which is a great concern and a very important program, but Dr David Williams, the medical officer of health of the Thunder Bay District Health Unit, did write me and what he said was:

"This issue is only one part of the overall complex problem and potentially hazardous decision to offload all the public health services and programs to the municipality. Public health, in principle, seeks to put in place preventive and health promotional programs rather than depending upon enforcement and punitive measures. Prevention when done well is invisible. Thus, it is prone to be overlooked in the debate because those issues which are considered more big-ticket items and ones which have been the centre of past controversy continue to take the limelight.

"A fragmented, decentralized public health system will not be capable of providing the public of Ontario with a timely, informed and coordinated response to outbreaks of disease. Loss of provincial funding will require a public health program to be delivered under the threat of enforcement and provincial offence charges being laid, the antithesis of the basic principle and priority of public health programs and services presently in place."

Dr Williams says it very, very well and obviously he says it very passionately. I will agree with one thing the member for Scarborough East said — and it's difficult not to respond to him directly, and I'm sure the member for Fort William will do so. The Crombie commission did indeed say that public health should not be part of the downloading process, and it's clear that it would be a disaster.

I remain convinced in fact the Minister of Health himself does not believe it should be part of the downloading process, but because of this ridiculous package that's been put together, public health has become a part of it. We all oppose it. The minister opposed it. Public health should not be part of the process.

2000

**Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt):** I must say that I come down four-square on the side of the member for Fort William, who delivered her, as usual, well-researched and very focused comments on this particular bill.

For the member from Scarborough or Canadian Tire, or wherever he's from, to impugn the member for Fort William's comments is grossly unfair. The Crombie report didn't deal with the housing issue because I don't think that in their wildest dreams they thought the government would do that to social housing. I don't think that for a minute they thought the government would be that silly.

What the member from Scarborough didn't comment on was what the Crombie report had to say about ambulance services. I wonder why he didn't concentrate on that, why he didn't deal with something that's in the report, because I can tell you that the member for Fort William is absolutely correct when she talks about the silliness of this downloading.

I don't want to speak any longer at this point, because I'm up next to speak.

**The Acting Speaker:** The Chair recognizes the member for Fort William for a two-minute response.

**Mrs McLeod:** Let me just suggest that the member for Scarborough East really does need to learn a lot about listening. Not for one moment, as the member for Nickel Belt has said, would I have suggested that David Crombie and his panel spent any time on the issue of social housing. David Crombie never dreamt that you would dump all of that on municipalities. David Crombie never dreamt that any government, even a Conservative government, would do any of what you are doing with this downloading. Maybe that's because David Crombie is a Progressive Conservative and he would not have believed that a government could do this. When he found out what you were prepared to do, that's when he said, "Don't do it," and you went ahead and did it anyway.

I'm glad my colleague the member for Port Arthur touched again on the issue of public health, because we need to spend even more time on that.

I'm glad the member for Nickel Belt touched on the issue of ambulances. He, as I do, comes from a northern community. My northern community covers a lot of kilometres that are in unorganized townships. There aren't a whole lot of people living there, there is not a lot of assessment base, but there are a lot of miles of provincial highways where a lot of car accidents take place. Nobody has any idea who is going to pay for the ambulance cost as it crosses one boundary of unorganized township into a municipal township into a city township — some of the few details that remain to be sorted out.

The bottom line is, why would anybody believe this government on this issue? They started out saying, "Don't worry, this is a revenue-neutral exercise," and it was shown to be a \$1.2-billion net offload. They changed it a little bit and said, "Okay, it's revenue-neutral now," and they now acknowledge it's \$667 million that is dumped on to the municipalities. "But don't worry, that was announced earlier. They expected that." It still counts. It is still part of the net dumping on to municipalities. It is still going to put the municipalities under considerable pressure. I find it incomprehensible that anybody can speak to a piece of legislation when their own government says that the numbers, even today, even now, are estimates.

**The Acting Speaker:** Further debate?

**Mr Laughren:** I see that the table officers have cut me back to 10 minutes under the standing orders, which should make some of you happy. I understand that.

I want to make some comments on Bill 152. I realize the content of the bill deals with a lot more than what I'm going to deal with, because 10 minutes is a very restrictive time frame.

The bill itself deals with the downloading of social housing, as the member for Fort William so articulately put it. It also deals with the downloading of the inspection of septic systems, responsibility for public health, the Building Code Act and building permits, the Environmental Protection Act, the Ontario Water Resources Act, GO Transit in the GTA and Hamilton-Wentworth area,

and of course day nurseries. That's a huge amount of downloading.

To be fair, there are a lot of traditionally local expenses being picked up by the government in the form of education costs. The real question is, is it a fair tradeoff? I can recall being in government and trying to work out a disentanglement arrangement with the municipalities which didn't work out. The municipalities walked away from the exercise at the end of the day. I always regretted that, but nevertheless that was their choice. I think it was somewhat clouded by the social contract, which was coming into effect at that point. Nevertheless, I understand the need for disentanglement and the need for streamlining the process.

But that's not what this bill is all about, not the final effect of this bill. This bill is about dumping costs on municipalities in order to save the government money so they can pay for their tax cut. It's not a wash. Nobody believes that it's an even tradeoff. Nobody out there believes that any more. If you find somebody who believes it, I hope you'll ask them to give me a call, because it's simply not true. Nobody believes it any more.

**Mr Gilchrist:** Bob Chiarelli believes it.

**Mr Laughren:** I don't believe that Bob Chiarelli — there may be some Tory hacks and sycophants who believe it, but no thinking person believes that it's an even tradeoff that you're doing with the municipalities. You're moving too fast, you're not making the right decisions, you're not listening to the people who are affected, in this case the municipalities. All in all, at the end of the day you're going to have a mess on your hands. It's as simple as that.

I looked at the numbers, and these are Conservative government numbers, not my numbers, because I know you think my numbers would be suspect. Your numbers say that there's going to be a loss of unconditional grants to the municipalities, which I believe comes to about \$666 million. That's ending. Then there's the download from the province to the municipalities, which comes to another \$550 million, and I believe those are government numbers as well. You add that all up and it comes to \$1.216 billion.

The government says: "Don't be worried. We're putting \$570 million into a community reinvestment fund and everything at the end of the day will be just fine." The trouble is people aren't believing that because, first of all, the \$500 million doesn't make up for the amount that's being downloaded.

Also, I happen to represent a northern constituency, and the Minister of Northern Development has promised a permanent \$70-million fund to help northern municipalities with what he calls "special needs." Presumably that means year after year there will be \$70 million. But the total download in the north, according to the arithmetic by others, is between \$282 million and \$292 million. That's hardly a wash. That's hardly an even tradeoff. You're dealing with municipalities in the north that, by and large, do not have a very substantial tax base. You're going to have an enormous amount of unhappiness in northern Ontario when all of this shakes down.

The numbers that come from the municipal area show that there are going to be very significant per household costs as a result of all this downloading. I'll just give you some examples: in the Algoma district, an increased cost per household of from \$982 to \$1,010 as a result of this downloading; in my own area, over \$1,100 per household as a result of the downloading; in Sudbury, an increased cost of between \$913 and \$953 per household as a result of this downloading. The people in these municipalities are not going to sit still as you do this to them.

The area that bothers me the most is the downloading of ambulances. Right now there are about 172 different ambulance delivery services. If you turn that over to the municipalities, that's going to increase and you're going to have all sorts of cross-boundary disputes and allocation of costs as these ambulances move from one municipality to another, picking up a sick person in one municipality and delivering them to another and then moving to a hospital in yet another municipality afterwards. These are the kinds of things that are going to drive people nuts, and I'm telling you they will be very unhappy with it.

The member from Scarborough talked about the Crombie report. I happen to have it here and this is what the Crombie report had to say about ambulance services: "It is the view of the subpanel" that looked at ambulance services "that the province should continue to fund and control ambulance services as part of the health care system. This would maintain a seamless system in the area of health care with a consistent level of care and service province-wide."

#### 2010

How clear and definitive can you get? This is your handpicked committee chaired by David Crombie, well-known red Tory, who sent this to you. As though you are thumbing your nose at Mr Crombie, you go ahead and say, "We're going to download ambulance services to all the municipalities." It's as though you didn't have any respect whatsoever for him.

The people who feel most betrayed by you folks are the Ambulance Service Alliance of Ontario, consisting of the ambulance operators. They felt really betrayed. This is what they say. This is a letter to Mr Harris:

"You may recall, as leader of the official opposition party, in the fall of 1993 you met with a number of our operators. You kindly listened to our concerns regarding the infamous Swimmer report, a report that I might add attached a value to the operator's licence. At the conclusion of our meeting, you left us with the assurance that you would look after the ambulance operators in this province. A statement that you upheld until the introduction of Bill 152."

That's the ambulance operators, and they conclude their letter by saying:

"The unfunded liabilities coupled with the prospect of losing the opportunity to deliver ambulance service to the communities one has served, in some cases for a significant number of years, amounts to expropriation without compensation followed by personal bankruptcy."

Can you imagine the party of free enterprise, the Tories in this province expropriating without compensation? That takes me back to regimes in other parts of the world. There they are, they're saying that the Tories are practising expropriation without compensation. My goodness, who would have thought that the Tories would be charged with that by, traditionally their friends, the ambulance operators of the province? But that's how badly they feel betrayed, particularly by the Premier, because he told them he would look after the ambulance operators of this province.

I think it's a bit unseemly to put it that way, but that's what he said to them. Then he comes in, introduces Bill 152, hits them over the head and does what they call expropriation without compensation. Who would have thought that a bunch of neo-cons would support expropriation without compensation? Because that's what you're doing to the ambulance operators of the province.

The government is making a mistake. There are a lot of parts of this bill I haven't dealt with, obviously, but I think the quality of ambulance services is very important and is part of what people have come to expect to be part of the health care system of this province. They're going to be very unhappy when they see results of what happens when you download ambulance service to the municipalities.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin):** Questions or comments?

**Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough):** I have the pleasure of responding a little bit to the illustrious member for Nickel Belt, whom I respect a great deal, but let me put it on record that I don't agree with him.

We've heard a lot about disentanglement here today. It's kind of funny. I think back on my years in municipal politics when both the Liberal government and the NDP government were talking about disentanglement and how they were going to solve the problem of the delivery of service so that we could make it efficient, we could make it accountable, and they never did a thing about it. They tried, absolutely, but they didn't have the intestinal fortitude to carry it all the way through.

I hear these constant words about dumping costs and downloading. The whole approach to business today is to do it in a businesslike way: the delivery of service, the efficiency, the accountability, less duplication, less overlap. If we don't get that out of our system, we are in major trouble, and we have been in major trouble for a long time.

It is absolutely ludicrous for two or three levels of government to be delivering the same services, ludicrous for two or three levels of government to be looking after the same types of things. If we don't start to do it on an individual basis—that's what put the costs up. If we can put those dollars back into the services to benefit the people we are trying to serve, we will be much better off.

One of the members, I believe the member for Fort William, made a comment, something about, "Why should we be getting a hold of the costs?" My goodness, it's all about getting a hold of the costs, and if we don't do it

now, we've got a major problem for our children in the future.

**Mr Patten:** I enjoyed the comments of the member for Nickel Belt. He pointed out three or four things that are worthy of note. He referred to the investment fund as being some way of trying to come back and addressing something after the fact, after months of denying that there was a problem. Then he pointed out the numerous municipalities that will be facing property tax increases, because that's the crux of this whole thing, it's not just passing along services.

As the member for Peterborough said, everybody would agree with streamlining administrations. No one, as far as I know, disagrees with doing that. If there's a better way to deliver something, let's do it. What we're saying, and what the people at the municipal level are saying, is that you're passing down services that you were advised not to do and putting them on the property tax, which doesn't make sense. At the same time you're downloading the cost of those services. You leave the municipalities with two choices, or maybe three. They cut their service, have tax increases or have a combination, and any municipality in its right mind won't want to look at tax increases. I don't think that's in the cards.

What this will really mean in the long term, once this is implemented, is that we will have less service for people. When people find that out, after hearing all the rhetoric of, "This is a wash," and, "This is going to be no extra cost," and, "Municipalities can handle the responsibility of all this," then I think you'll see the biggest backlash you ever saw.

Finally, the member for Nickel Belt, dealing with all of the issues, asked, is this going to be a better arrangement for ambulances? I suspect it won't, when we start looking at the ways in which the cross-boundary situations will add to the complexity of all this.

**Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie):** It's interesting as you sit here and listen to the various presentations that are made in this place. The member for Nickel Belt got up here just a short moment ago and laid out for us the impact this downloading will have on northern Ontario.

Not long before that, we had the member for Fort William, a long-serving member of this House, with the member for Nickel Belt, who is seen by everybody in this place as the dean of the operation, lay on the table the argument that sees social housing under attack when this bill comes into effect and its impact is felt.

Before that, we had the member for London Centre, a very thoughtful, articulate and well-versed member of this place, who takes great pains to make sure she knows the detail of every bill that comes before the place, making the argument that public health will be affected in a major and negative way by this bill.

Then we hear the folks across the way. We finally tonight had a member, the member for Niagara South, who made an argument here and took his full 10 minutes. In that 10 minutes I began to realize just how little these folks understand what they're doing and the impact it has on communities and the lives of people in this province.

We have the Hudaks and the Gilchris and the Clements and the Bairds of the caucus across the way who are really driving this agenda; all young members, who really are still wet behind the ears in many significant ways, coming to this House and driving an agenda that's going to have such overwhelming impact on the way we do things in this province, things that have been put in place over the years by people like the David Crombies of the world who have been thoughtful and who have taken the time to make sure that they were right and well thought out and that the impacts were understood. Shame on you for not doing your homework. Shame on you for the arguments you make.

2020

**Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke-Rexdale):** This sounds very much like the Wednesday night of last week on the services improvement bill. The folks across the way are still in the mantra of "with any change, we won't tackle it." We have a litany of excuses from the member for Nickel Belt when he said, "It's interesting that the municipalities didn't really want any of this, so we're not going to do it." Forget the taxpayer, don't worry about trying to achieve any efficiency; don't worry about trying to achieve any kind of quality coordination. For goodness' sake, we wouldn't want to do that.

But the mantra — you have two, the bipolars — is firmly caught in most of their thinking across the way, especially the member for Sault Ste Marie. You either have tax increases or you have service cuts or both. There's no other possibility of doing anything with this. I've never heard so much doom and gloom. You never hear any solid alternatives, except the only alternative they would have, especially the official opposition, to increase, jack up your prices.

Yet when you do that, they turn around and say, "You shouldn't be doing that. Just leave things the way they are. Everything's pretty good the way it is, even though there are some efficiencies and effectiveness modes of operation that can be achieved. But we shouldn't make the effort, utilize any of the energy to do that," whether it's in social housing or anything else.

If you go back to the history of social housing, who started it? Social housing started with the municipalities, with churches, with labour groups and so on, and then suddenly it bloomed into a huge governmental program. That's the problem we have in not changing the things that are —

**The Deputy Speaker:** Thank you. The member for Nickel Belt, you have two minutes.

**Mr Laughren:** I appreciate the remarks from the member for Peterborough, who was most restrained, more than I thought he would be, and the members for Ottawa Centre, Sault Ste Marie, Etobicoke-Bedrock —

**Mr Hastings:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I don't mind that occasionally, but I always call the dean of the House the member for Nickel Belt and I would expect he would appropriately accord the same privilege to the name of the riding of the good people of Etobicoke-Rexdale.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I totally agree with you, and I think you will refer to him as the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale.

**Mr Laughren:** I agree totally with the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale; it was a slip of the tongue. I'm particularly pleased that here with us this evening as well is the member for Mississauga Molars.

I really must deal with some of the comments that were made, though, because it seems to me that there's a misunderstanding that, because we oppose what the government is doing on any particular bill, somehow we're opposed to any kind of change, we don't want streamlining, we don't want more efficiencies in the system. That's simply not true; of course we do.

I wasn't being defensive when I said that when we tried to do it, we thought we were going to get there with disentanglement and the municipalities walked away. We didn't walk away; it wasn't because we lacked internal fortitude. They walked away, and I regretted that very much at the time and I regret it to this day. But regardless I do very much appreciate the interest of the other members in taking part in this debate, and I look forward to further speakers on this bill.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Further debate?

**Mr John R. Baird (Nepean):** I'm pleased to have the opportunity to rise and to speak for a few moments on this important piece of legislation. I listened to my colleagues opposite and they say how great it is we have more members participating in debate, we have more members getting their constituent views on the record, and I agree with the member for Ottawa Centre. I'll certainly use this opportunity to put forward some constructive opinion.

I listened to my colleagues earlier and one of my colleagues said: "Ontario deserves disentanglement. Taxpayers need to truly understand who is responsible for what." That's disentanglement and that was our colleague the member for Fort William, and she's right. I think previous governments have tried exercises aimed at disentanglement but they've lacked the courage to follow it through. They've lacked the guts, when the going gets tough, to just put the issue aside. I think the taxpayers of Ontario want a provincial government to stick to their guns and to ensure that taxpayers' services are delivered efficiently and effectively and that the taxpayers' dollar is treated with the utmost respect.

I have a quote here from the Premier which I think is very relevant. He said, "I think it is important for us to get on with the job of making it clear to citizens who is paying for what and who is responsible for raising the money for whatever services are being provided."

*Interjection.*

**Mr Baird:** Someone says, "Stop sucking up to the Premier." That of course was Premier Bob Rae, not Premier Mike Harris. I've been accused of a lot of things from my colleagues the members opposite, but sucking up to Bob Rae has never been one of them. That's what Premier Bob Rae had to say. I agree with Premier Rae, and certainly Premier Rae's views on a whole host of

issues have begun to change since he left the Premier's office.

I'd like to read a quote from the Minister of Community and Social Services: "The result [of disentanglement] will be increased accountability which is more important than ever in today's economic climate."

Had Janet Ecker, the member for Durham West, made that comment, she would have been right. But that wasn't the Minister of Community and Social Services. Was it the member for Markham? Wrong. Do you know who it was? It was the current member for London Centre who made that statement in August 1992, that in today's economic climate increased accountability will be more important than ever, and I agree with the member for London Centre. I didn't hear her mention —

*Interjection.*

**Mr Baird:** She was an NDP member, the member for Kitchener suggests, and still is, and served very ably in the cabinet for a number of years. She didn't mention that quote in her speech earlier, which surprised me, quite frankly, because I would have thought she would have wanted to put that on the record.

Another quote which I took great interest in was the Minister of Municipal Affairs. Here's what he had to say. "You can't really have accountability if you have two and sometimes three levels of government doing the same stuff...the main purpose is to sort out the roles." Was that Al Leach, the Minister of Municipal Affairs? Wrong. It wasn't Al Leach. Who said that? The former member for Windsor-Riverside, Dave Cooke. That's who said that, and I couldn't help but agree.

But I've got another quote. We've got to talk about a Minister of Municipal Affairs who followed him, to be fair: "Right now responsibility is blurred, and this overlap leads to inefficiency. Clearer lines of responsibility and more efficient government should ultimately save money." That was one of Dave Cooke's successors as Minister of Municipal Affairs. Was it Mr Leach? No. It was in fact Ed Philip, the Minister of Municipal Affairs, the former member for Etobicoke-Rexdale. He said that in the Windsor Star on April 26, 1993, and I certainly agree.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Baird:** The member for Nickel Belt we'll look for. I might have some quotes in here on him. He's actually quite a good fellow. That was interesting. I could go on and I will go on.

I have a quote from one of the member for Nickel Belt's colleagues from northern Ontario, Ms Martel, the member for Sudbury East, when she was Minister of Northern Development:

"The people of Ontario want to see their governments work together. We expect that the councils will support the agreement [the NDP's disentanglement package] and that it will take effect on January 1, 1994. When that happens, Ontario's system of government will become more efficient and more accountable. And that's good news for all of us."

That dream Ms Martel had is still alive and well, and we're going to follow through and ensure that more effi-

cient government arrives in Ontario. That'll be good news for all taxpayers in the province. What people see is four levels of government.

My colleague the member for Scarborough East brought up the issue of housing. We ask ourselves, does it make sense, when we see the federal government in Ottawa, having already reached agreements with two provinces seeking to get out of social housing, to have not just the federal government but the provincial government, the regional government and the local government all with overlapping responsibilities? It would make clear sense to have a more efficient government, to have one level of government responsible for that, to provide better and more efficient service to the taxpayers. That's something that's very, very important.

I listened with great interest to a speech by my colleague the member for Cochrane South, and I wanted to touch base on it. He spoke earlier about the fiscal management capacity of this government, and I think that's a credible issue for him to raise. I did notice that, when the current Minister of Finance rose in the House earlier today to table the public accounts — my friend from Nickel Belt, this was always the worst day of the year for him, where he had to expose the reality of his colleagues and their spending habits. Through no fault of his own, he was the one who had to deliver the bad news for the cabinet, because it wasn't, of course, his fault.

**2030**

The Minister of Finance earlier today released the public accounts for the fiscal year 1996-97. That marked the first full fiscal year the Mike Harris government and the Ernie Eves term as Treasurer were accountable. The member for Etobicoke-Rexdale —

**The Deputy Speaker:** Member for Nepean, if you address the Chair, it's easier.

**Mr Baird:** Sure. I said "the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale." I didn't speak in the second person, Mr Speaker.

The member asks what the results were. He was following through on a campaign commitment to balance the budget in five years, and in fiscal 1996-97, in the budget, he put a goal, a benchmark, of an \$8.2-billion deficit, to get it down from the \$11.3 billion to \$8.2 billion, and he released the final numbers today about what sorts of results they got in his term as Treasurer. Was it \$8.2 billion? No. Was it \$7.5 billion, as he said it would be? No. Was it \$7.4 billion, what he updated it to be? No. What we learned earlier today was the real number, the true fiscal capacity of this government to manage. The number was \$6.9 billion. That is more than \$1.3 billion ahead of schedule from what he had committed to in his first full budget. That is good news for taxpayers and it is good news for hardworking families across the province.

You would think there would have been a unanimous moment to congratulate the minister and the government on that success, but the doom and gloom on the other side of the aisle was simply unbelievable. I was disappointed that they wouldn't have been as happy as most taxpayers across the province were.

Why did the provincial government exceed that target in terms of its fiscal capacity under this bill? It exceeded that target because it brought in \$300 million more money than it expected to bring in. Why? Because there are more taxpayers paying more taxes. What Ernie Eves has discovered is that if you cut taxes, you are going to bring in more money, because more people work, and more people working is good news.

**Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland):** How many?

**Mr Baird:** My colleague from Northumberland would want to know how many more people are working. How many more people? Some 224,000 net new jobs were created in Ontario. That's good news, and I know my colleagues opposite will want to reflect on the success of that. That is 219,000 off welfare, so when the member for Cochrane South appropriately asks, "Could you trust this government in terms of its fiscal capacity to manage?" I certainly will put Mike Harris's and Ernie Eves's capacity as fiscal managers on the table any day, any time.

With respect to the Who Does What exercise, I have a tremendous amount of faith in local government. One of my colleagues said, "I think local authorities know their area best." That was the member for Essex South, on December 13, 1995, and I certainly agreed with him. The good news is that my colleague the member for Oxford, the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, and the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Community and Social Services are sitting down working with the municipalities to try to make this agreement better, consulting and listening so they can respond to concerns they may have in terms of the implementation of these pieces of legislation, always prepared.

As a result of those, there were substantial changes made. If the municipalities, working in partnership with the provincial government, can show us a better way to achieve goals of a more efficient and more effective provincial government, the provincial government is certainly very keen to do so and those discussions with two committees are ongoing. They are listening, they are working and they are looking for a better way to achieve the best results for the taxpayers of Ontario. That is good news for hardworking families in Ontario.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Questions or comments?

**Mr Gravelle:** I'm glad to have an opportunity to respond to the comments made by the member for Nepean. It continues to be startling. While he is being rather cute in terms of the quotes he is using from previous speakers, he is ignoring the fact that the whole question of municipal disentanglement is something we don't argue with the concept of, and you can play those games all you want.

What really becomes the issue is how it is being done, and as the member for Fort William pointed out in her comments, yes, there should be disentanglement, but the province should be handling the social services portion of the disentanglement. They are the ones that should be funding it, and I think everybody agrees that should be the case. It is the process by which it is being done.

The concern I have, if I may speak as a member from northern Ontario, is what it is doing to some of the com-

munities and some of the fears that are existing in the communities. For example, Mayor Bob Krause of the township of Schreiber wrote me recently with some concerns that he expressed, and I would like to have the opportunity to read some of the remarks he has. He says:

"I'm having a difficult time with the provincial government's assumption that we can cut our operating costs by a certain percentage each year simply by finding efficiencies. That is how we already operate. For example, our municipal support grant has been reduced over the past few years, and we have cut our budget drastically to compensate for this lost revenue. In the meantime, material and shipping costs have been rising.

"The cost of doing business in northwestern Ontario has certainly not decreased, but we have found better, more efficient ways to operate every year. Two years ago we had 18 regular employees. We have reduced our staff by 25% to 14 and are still operating the library, welfare, recreation, cemetery, roads, water and sewer and all the township services."

The reality is that the cuts to municipalities have been going on for some time now and they have managed it very well. But when one looks at the downloading realities, when one looks at the fact that Schreiber now has to pay OPP policing costs, the extraordinary added cost to them in terms of the transfers of provincial highways, it adds up to nothing much less than an attempt in some ways to kill our northern communities. Some of these communities cannot manage it, and you cannot deny that and you cannot be heartless about it. You've got to recognize these are concerns, and they're legitimate.

**Mr Martin:** It's good to rise again in this place for another two minutes. These days in this place, because of the change in the rules, the only way a person can put a bit of a speech together is by getting up two minutes at a time and putting on the table their thoughts on these very important issues that face the constituents of my community and of the province. It's actually sad.

I want to continue from where I left off just a while ago and reflect on the comments of the member who just presented: the failure of the members opposite, the Gilchris and the Bairs and the Hudaks and the Clements, to fully understand the full impact of their decisions on communities and on people out there and their inability to put anything they do in the fuller, more appropriate context.

For example, the member for Nepean just spoke of the presentation today by the Minister of Finance and talked about the lowering of the deficit and did not speak at all about the human deficit that is being created because of the very narrow direction the government is taking re its finances. Present that particular piece of information to those people in the province who have lost 22% of their income, the people you hit in your first month of being in government, the poorest and the most vulnerable among us. You took 22% of their income. Talk to them about this effort you are making to tackle the deficit. Talk to the people who stand in line at hospitals to get heart surgery, who are actually dying while they wait. Talk to them

about this and talk to the women who lost the \$400 million in pay equity payments. Fortunately, you'll have to—

**The Deputy Speaker:** Your time has expired.

**Mr Ed Doyle (Wentworth East):** It's a pleasure for me to get up and make a few comments today on people's comments themselves. We heard our member from the Ottawa area earlier making some quotes that had been offered, and I'd like to issue a few quotes myself.

There is one quote here that appeared in today's *Globe and Mail*, as a matter of fact, which said that Canadians are too heavily taxed. It turns out that since we have come into power our taxes have been dropping and our jobs are going up, as the member had pointed out in his comments earlier. Jobs are up, housing starts are up and taxes are down. We're not doing too badly.

There are other quotes I'd like to mention here today, some from a book called the red book. It says, "For every week that Bob Rae has been Premier, Ontario has lost nearly 1,000 jobs." This red book is not unlike a book that we call the Common Sense Revolution; as a matter of fact, some people think it was written by the same author. But now that we are implementing the Common Sense Revolution, we are being told we shouldn't do it.

On another page it says: "The NDP government has built up a growing environmental deficit. Our natural capital is depreciating while our environmental liabilities have been increasing." If I can go on to quote further from this little document, it says: "The public has sent a clear message that it wants government to change. It is up to government to prove that it can change."

Now we'll take a look at what was said in the Common Sense Revolution. In the Common Sense Revolution we had said:

"Canadians are probably the most overgoverned people in the world. We do not need every layer — federal, provincial, quasi-governmental bodies, regional, municipal and school board — that we have now.

"The example being set by the Harris government, of the 24% reduction in the number of MPPs and a 20% cut in non-priority spending, will set the benchmark for municipal politicians and trustees."

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**Mr Patten:** It gives me great pleasure to comment on my colleague in the Ottawa-Carleton region. The member for Wentworth East should know that Nepean is a completely separate city from Ottawa and a proud city it is.

The member was very clever in his use of quotes, and I think it's fair to say that often when someone gets into the responsibilities of governing, they begin to see some of the problems and difficulties and they want to address that. I haven't heard any side — and I'm pleased to see that there are so many quotations from the red book because, obviously, it has some great value and some great statements, some of which the government itself agrees with.

We do not dispute any streamlining or any improvements related to administration and saving, but the one thing that I would like to say to the member for Nepean is that you forget that many municipalities, most if not all, as a matter of fact all, have already been faced with a series

of cuts over the last three or four years in any case, and some severe ones. They haven't taken that into consideration.

Not only that, the responsibilities suggested by the advisory Who Does What — in terms of ambulance service, for example, to not do that — they suggested that was part, and the member for Nickel Belt I think addressed that particular issue. The member for Scarborough East, I think it was, who is a very vigilant evangelist for his party, continues to say that the panel didn't say it. No, the panel didn't say, "Don't put social housing on the property tax." David Crombie came back from a holiday, and he was so upset to hear what had happened that he made a public statement, saying this should never have happened, it should not be on property tax. If that's going to happen, keep things the way they are because it's better the way they are than what your particular proposal calls for.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The member for Nepean, you have two minutes.

**Mr Baird:** I'd like to thank the members for Port Arthur, Sault Ste Marie, Wentworth East and Ottawa Centre for responding to my remarks. I certainly appreciate them.

The member for Sault Ste Marie spoke about the comments I made with respect to the announcement by the treasurer of the public accounts, and he spoke about there being no reference to human deficit in my remarks. Well, I think there was a tremendous human deficit when this government took office more than two years ago. This province was in trouble with no hope for a better future, no hope for opportunities for people. But there is hope for many more now, not enough hope.

We've got to work harder to see the economy create more jobs. We've got to work harder to rededicate ourselves to eliminating poverty, to working harder to create more jobs in the economy. But 224,000 people were at home and the phone rang; they got the phone call, they picked up the phone and the voice on the other end of the phone said, "You've got the job," and those people are now providers for their families.

Those people's children are now able to see them get up every day and go to work, and that's distinctly a good thing. That solid growth and economic growth in the economy has been seen in the private sector and that's a tremendously good thing that people will experience the dignity of work and being able to contribute to our society. The unemployment rate is still far too high. We've all got to recommit ourselves at all levels of government to work harder, to see the economy do better, but I think that's distinctly a good thing.

To my colleague from Port Arthur, he doesn't disagree with the concept of disentanglement. They don't disagree with the concept of work for welfare. They don't disagree with the concept of tax cuts. They don't disagree with the concept of deficit reduction. They don't disagree with the concept of a \$17-billion health budget. They don't disagree with the concept of hospital restructuring. But they just disagree with the way we're doing it. I'd like to see an alternative proposed by the members opposite.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Further debate?

**Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury):** It's a pleasure to offer a few comments in the now reduced 10 minutes that I have to speak because of the new rule changes, and I'd like to divide it in several different ways.

First of all, I'd like to address some of the concerns that the residents in northern Ontario and in the riding of Sudbury have expressed to me with regard to public health services. Then I'd like to offer to the members of the opposition some alternatives, some suggestions and some information that I've shared with the various ministers with regard to this particular bill, information that I think would have been very, very worthwhile using in arriving at the method of doing business and the idea of what the impact is going to be on the various municipalities.

I'm sure that not only the members in opposition but the government members have received many, many concerns from the citizens they represent with regard to the downloading of public health programs, both mandatory and non-mandatory, to the municipalities and the municipalities' ability to be able to provide those programs.

I'd like to address for the next few minutes one particular program that exists in northern Ontario, and it's called the northern regional genetics program, which is the sole provider of genetic services to about 8% of the population of Ontario, but that happens to be the entire northern Ontario population, which covers 90% of the territory of Ontario.

The northern regional genetics program offers clinical consultation, genetic counselling, genetic testing and educational opportunities in the sensitive areas of hereditary disease, congenital malformation, mental retardation, productive problems, familial cancer, leukaemia, maternal serum screening and prenatal diagnosis.

You see, this isn't a mandatory program. This is a non-mandatory program. The Association of Municipalities of Ontario has already suggested that they're not interested in the responsibility or the accountability for mandatory public health programs let alone non-mandatory public health programs.

What happens to a program such as the northern regional genetics program? Does it now become a non-existent program because it transcends municipal boundaries? This program is offered to the entire north. It is not offered to one municipality; it is offered to every municipality in northern Ontario.

I've asked the question of the Minister of Health, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the Minister of Northern Development and Mines, for clarification and for direction so that I can tell the several hundred people who have contacted my office about this particular concern. To date, I want to tell you, that we haven't had any responses, and I guess I'm concerned that these non-mandatory programs, which are essential for northern Ontario but in fact essential for everyone in Ontario, are going to fall by the wayside because, seriously, the municipalities won't be able to afford them.

So I think that's a concern the minister has to address. I think that's a concern that has to be addressed by several ministers: the Minister of Health, the Minister of Municipal

Affairs and Housing and certainly the Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

Let me move on to something I did as critic for northern development and mines for the Liberal Party. After the announcements, I decided that it was very important and incumbent upon me to send out a municipal survey to all northern municipalities, collate the information — don't keep the information here, but share it with the Minister of Northern Development and Mines, and I did, and I'm sure that the Minister of Northern Development and Mines shared it with the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. These are some of the real responses that we received from the municipal leaders' survey.

With regard to municipalities considering raising taxes, the question was, "Do you believe that in order to meet future financial responsibilities your municipality will be required to consider raising taxes?" Well, 35% of the respondents said yes, 29% said possibly and 22% said most likely. Only 6% said no.

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A second question, with regard to the expectation of new user fees: "Do you believe that in order to meet future financial responsibilities your municipality will consider introducing new user fees for municipal services?" The answers were again staggering: Yes, 39% of the respondents; most likely, 22%; possibly, 37%. The percentage of respondents that said no was zero.

A third question, with regard to the level of services: "How do you believe the recent changes in funding from the provincial tier to the municipal tier will affect the number of municipal services which you presently deliver?" Well, "overall decrease in services" was 31% stating that substantial decreases to services will take place.

There are several other questions. The Minister of Northern Development and Mines has a copy of it. We offer, with municipalities, several alternatives, recommendations and suggestions. To date, I haven't heard from the minister.

An independent study was done with regard to the figures by the city manager and the treasurer of the city of Sudbury, who did a one-year and a three-year analysis using the minister's figures with regard to what the impact would be. Certainly the one-year impact on the north is an increase of \$263 million of expenditures; the three-year analysis, an increase of \$203.8 million in expenditures. That results in increases across northern Ontario of percentage municipal expenditures ranging from 20.3% in the Algoma district; 22% in the Kenora district; the Nipissing district of Premier Harris 23%; in Parry Sound 15.1%; in the region of Sudbury 19.7% over a one-year analysis, and percentages such as 20%, 17.4% etc.

The city offered several alternatives to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. I have spoken to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines about this particular study. He is very, very interested in the figures and says they make sense, even though they're only projected or estimated figures. But that's how we're basing

this downloading, on those types of figures, and I think that's wrong. Again, the city has offered several alternatives that haven't been pursued by the government.

Finally, the Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities and NOMA, the Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association, met with the parliamentary assistant and with the Minister of Northern Development and Mines, and the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing I think, and went through this document called Fairness and Equity for Our North. In it, they pointed out some of the commitments that your government made during the election in the Common Sense Revolution. I'm not going to quote them, because I'm trying to stand here this evening and to be non-partisan. I simply want to tell you that both the Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities and NOMA have provided several alternatives and several recommendations for you to follow.

I would only hope, as a member representing one riding in the province of Ontario, that the government members would listen, that the ministers responsible — the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the Minister of Northern Development and Mines — would only listen to some of the suggestions offered by the municipalities across northern Ontario, the city of Sudbury in their three-year analysis and FNOM and NOMA in their fairness and equality for our north. If you listen, I think you would be prone to make several major decisions and changes in direction.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Questions or comments?

**Mr Martin:** I want to take the next two minutes that I have in this narrowed-down opportunity that we all have in this place now to present our very real concerns about the agenda of the government to congratulate the member for Sudbury for an excellent presentation. He painted the picture of northern Ontario as another of the victims of this government.

This government is ready and quick to talk about, as they did this afternoon, the good work they're doing in the area of the deficit, but they are not willing to speak at all about the impact of the major cuts they're making and the effect it's having on communities and whole regions of this province, for example the region of northern Ontario.

The member for Sudbury very succinctly and in a very clear and supportive manner presented the impact and also some work that's been done by people in the north on alternatives. It's really interesting. We have a situation in this province now where the economy, and I'm willing to admit to this, is really doing well. Corporations are making historically record high profits. Every time we open a newspaper and we look at the quarterly reports, we see corporations and banks making historically record — as a matter of fact, a person in my community just recently called it "obscenely" — high profits.

That's happening at a time when we have taken 22% away from the most vulnerable and poorest in our communities in terms of their income; when we've taken away \$400 million from some of the lowest-paid women in the public sector. Mind you, the courts have now told you that you have to reverse that decision because you were con-

stitutionally wrong. You're knocking the stuffing out of northern Ontario, an area of the province that has been historically the engine of industrial growth in this province. You're kicking them until they have nothing left to give.

**Mr Bert Johnson (Perth):** It is a pleasure for me to get up and respond to the member for Sudbury on his speech. His 10-minute speech gave a lot of facts and figures that I appreciate being shared.

I would just like to set the stage of where we are for those who don't know. Here we are, we're at five to 9 on Tuesday night, September 9. The member for Sudbury has just given us a 10-minute speech. We have been blessed with hour speeches and with 20-minute speeches, and after seven hours of debating time in this House, then we reduce that down to 10. I just wanted to set that stage because at this time of night there may be some people who wonder why the member for Sudbury was not going on for a longer period of time. I just wanted to put that in context of the changes that this government has made.

I wanted to comment a little bit on his figures on Bill 152, and I'm glad he shared them because they are both interesting and appropriate. But that doesn't mean that we would interpret them in quite the same way as the member for Sudbury.

As you will recall, a little over two years ago the people of Ontario decided to make a change in government. We ran on the promise to create jobs, to do something about hope and opportunity in this province. I'm glad to see that the member for Sault Ste Marie has included in his remarks some of those achievements that we have made to this date because yes indeed, those things have been improved upon. We are certainly not satisfied. We're far from happy with it —

**The Deputy Speaker:** Your time has expired. The member for Port Arthur.

**Mr Gravelle:** I want to compliment the member for Sudbury on his remarks. Certainly they were very reasoned and they were very thoughtful, and I think in some way he was responding also to the government members who were saying: "Give us some alternatives. Give us some ideas." Those of us who know the member for Sudbury, and I think all do, certainly know he can get very, very angry. He's always very impassioned, but I think the calmness of his address tonight is very important. I hope the government members recognize that. He was trying in every way he could to say: "This might be considered wrong. This is something that might be harmful. You might be making a mistake. Please listen." I appreciated it very much myself.

I particularly appreciated him having an opportunity to spend some time on the genetic services and genetic counselling in the province, particularly in northern Ontario, and how many illnesses and how many conditions and situations genetic counselling can be extremely important for in this province. I think he made that point as well as anybody has. It speaks to the whole issue of public health and the downloading.

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There's a story I want to tell the members of the Legislature about. It went in an article that was written by Dr Raisa Deber, professor of politics and health policy at the University of Toronto.

Dr Deber talks about the fact that several years ago, Ontario had the highest rate of measles in all the Americas. "In 1991-92, Ontario had more than 8,000 reported cases. In 1996, the provincial government decided to implement a new immunization program. Many local public health departments disagreed, saying there were more important priorities. However, because of the provincial role, there was a rapid and complete response. As a result, there were only 16 reported cases of measles in 1997."

I think this speaks to the importance of the fact that public health doesn't recognize local boundaries. You cannot expect that one community will have the resources or be able to look after the process when province-wide epidemics and situations take place.

**M. Bisson :** Le membre de Sudbury, je pense, soulevait un point qui est très intéressant faisant affaire avec ces débats. C'est que le gouvernement fait ses décisions à beaucoup de reprises, en regardant la question, en regardant leur situation, d'une manière beaucoup plus idéologique que pratique.

Ce gouvernement à tant de reprises a fait des décisions idéologiques faisant affaire avec des politiques, comment certains programmes vont opérer, mais n'a jamais regardé à l'implémentation de ses politiques.

C'est vraiment ça le fléau, le problème qu'on a : c'est que le gouvernement tout à coup décide qu'ils vont faire quelque chose et ne figure vraiment pas comment ils vont faire marcher et ménager le changement.

On voit beaucoup que, par exemple, à différentes reprises des programmes sont coupés sans vraiment penser à ce que ça ira dire.

A good example is the northern genetics program. We are looking at the public health units in northern Ontario because of an ideological position taken by the government that it was going to download services on to municipalities. They did not realize that their decision was going to mean that in northern Ontario we would not have genetics programs funded by public health units in the future because the municipalities at this point are saying, "We aren't going to pick up the bill when the province downloads that responsibility to us."

What do you do as a northerner? What is the practical solution for a person living in Sudbury or a person living in Timmins or Kapuskasing or Thunder Bay? The practical solution, and I would argue it's not practical at all, is that we will have to go to some university hospital or some local hospital in downtown Toronto or Hamilton to get services that used to be delivered in the north, at further cost to the taxpayer, a loss for northern Ontario and I say a bad decision and bad management on the part of this government.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The member for Sudbury, you have two minutes.

**Mr Bartolucci:** I'd like to thank the member for Sault Ste Marie for his comments and for his dedication. Mr Martin always speaks from the heart, very sincerely.

To the member for Perth, I'd like to thank him for explaining to the people of Ontario why the rule changes effectively eliminate the opposition from putting forth a case in a longer time frame.

To the member for Port Arthur I would like to say that I'm always impassioned but never angry, but I'm glad you addressed the public health concerns, especially the concerns with regard to genetic services. I want the members across the way to believe it is so vital to the people of northern Ontario to have those types of programs enshrined or protected. The downloading initiative really doesn't do that.

Au député de Cochrane-Sud, merci pour vos mots. J'apprécie les remarques.

I want to tell the people of Ontario that the downloading initiative must be reconsidered. I'm not fearmongering when I tell you that if it is reconsidered and if we look at streamlining in a very sensible — even if you want to use a commonsense approach, you will change the direction you are going in. With all due respect to the government and its right to govern, in this instance a very serious error is being made, and the lasting consequences of this initiative will be, over the course of time, detrimental to the stability and the survival of many smaller communities not only in only northern Ontario but southern Ontario.

I thank you for your attention.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Further debate?

**Mr Bisson:** I want to come at this from about three different points. It's going to be rather difficult to do in the short 10 minutes we get now that the government has changed the rules. They have decided, by way of their majority in the House, to stifle the words of the opposition because they really don't want to listen to any kind of critical suggestions made by the opposition in regard to legislation they are bringing forward.

Specifically in this bill, the government is giving itself the legislative authority to go through its downloading exercises to municipalities. What does that mean for municipalities in Ontario? I will not speak at length about what it means economically, because most people can figure that out themselves. If the province stops paying for a service and says the municipality shall pick up the responsibility or downloads that responsibility to the municipality, it is pretty simple to figure out who is going to pay the bill: municipal taxpayers, that's who. You may be getting a tax break from the Mike Harris government in one pocket, from the 30% cut in the provincial income tax rate, but you are certainly going to be paying at the other end when it comes to your property taxes.

What does this mean from a policy perspective? That is what I want to spend my time on. It means a couple of things. Let's take a look at a couple of examples of what happens when the province abrogates its responsibility to deliver services here in Ontario and says the municipalities will now be responsible. It means there will be further fragmentation of services at the local delivery level.

Each level of government has, quite justly and quite rightly, its responsibility when it comes to delivering services. Municipalities are best situated to deliver what are essentially local services that do not have provincial interests. But clearly in services such as health care, such as long-term care, such as welfare, and the list goes on, there are provincial interests. For the government to suggest by its actions that there no provincial interests and, "We can just offload this to municipalities," I think is naïve at best. Not only is it naïve, I think it's really short-sighted, because it means that many Ontarians living in various communities across this great province are going to end up getting different levels of services based on where they live and the ability of their local municipality to pay.

In the situation of Timmins, I know from discussions I've had with our local aldermen and mayor that there is a great question about what transit services will be available to the citizens of the community of Timmins at the end of this downloading exercise. They really don't think they're going to be able to deliver adequate transit services to our citizens — not to mention Wheel-Trans, which is quite another issue.

But how is that going to compare to the transit services for people living in Toronto or Ottawa or Sudbury? What will happen is that municipalities, for fiscal reasons because of the downloading, are going to have to make some choices: to concentrate on delivering either health services or transit services, or what used to be provincial housing, now municipal housing. They will have to make those decisions. Depending on where you live in this province, you will get services delivered at varying levels and in different ways.

That is not what a community is all about. That's not what a province is supposed to be about. The reason we have both federal and provincial governments is to make sure we have the taxing capacity through the federal government to raise dollars to pay for services that we've decided in this country all citizens should have access to. The federal government then makes sure there are provincial standards that each province must follow, and consequently the provinces are responsible for delivering those services in their provincial jurisdiction, to make sure there is consistency throughout the province and the country. This government is short-circuiting that. They're saying that somehow municipalities are going to be able to do this.

In many cases, I would say in almost 99% of them, services are being transferred to municipalities without adequate funding because it's a strict download to the municipalities; therefore the municipalities will not have the ability to pay. They will either have to raise taxes or cut service. I submit that either is going to be a losing proposition for the local taxpayer.

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What you end up doing, by the very nature of this download exercise, is fragmenting services. For example, in ambulance services, right now there is a very greatly coordinated system across the province. In different places

it can be run by the municipality, the province or a private operator, but the provincial government, through the Ministry of Health, takes the responsibility of making sure there are standards that set out how ambulances are run, how ambulance attendants are trained and that there is a dispatch system that works and makes sense when it comes to dispatching an ambulance to an emergency call. Once we move to this new system, this government is going to fragment the system even beyond what it is now. I think it should be a totally provincially mandated and run system, but this government is going to move in the opposite direction and is going to give it to each individual municipality.

"At first," they say, "we are going to establish standards by way of legislation to make sure the municipalities deliver those services according to a provincial standard." The problem is that if you don't give them the bucks, how are they going to do it?

Imagine you as the province, imagine the Tories today, if the federal government were to come forward and say: "We're going to offload the entire responsibility for health care to the province of Ontario. We will no longer transfer any dollars to the province through transfer payments, and we expect and we demand that the provincial government deliver these services according to the guidelines we set out as the federal Parliament." What do you think we would be saying here in Ontario? All members of the House, Conservatives, New Democrats or Liberals, would be standing and saying, "The federal government cannot offload its responsibility on to the province without giving us adequate legislative authority to make our own decisions or giving us the funding."

That is exactly what the municipalities are arguing. So in the end, what you've got is the worst possible scenario, the worst of both worlds. I say this government is going in the opposite direction in terms of trying to streamline services and make them more efficient. They're not streamlining; they're getting rid of them. They're going to get rid of them and make them even more fragmented, and they haven't even figured out how to make it work.

That's the second point. This government, in terms of the way they do business, tries to make us believe that they're the be-all and end-all when it comes to managing government services, that there is nobody like the Conservative Party when it comes to making decisions about how government should be run and how those programs should be delivered. But we see time and time again that this government has a very cavalier attitude, analogous to shooting first and asking questions later.

We see the government decide on the question of social housing: "We don't like public housing. We want to get rid of it. We're not quite sure how. We'll figure it out." Then all of a sudden one day they say, "We're going to transfer the responsibility to the municipalities and let them figure it out." How ludicrous. If the government doesn't believe the province should be in the business of providing social housing, they have to figure out how to get out of it in an orderly way. But they can't even do that right. They're incompetent. They're doing the worst pos-

sible thing. They're saying: "We can't figure it out. We'll throw it off to the municipalities and let them figure it out." What do you think the consequences will be? There's going to be a real mess in the province when it comes to how municipalities are able to cope with this downloading and this offloading that the province is doing in social housing.

There's not only the example of social housing. There's a whole gamut of services the province is offloading to municipalities that will have the same kinds of consequences. If you believe ideologically that you want to make changes to how services are run in the province, at least get it right. You have a responsibility to figure out what it is you want to do; then how you're going to do it. We're hearing time and again that people in this province are saying that not only are you going too fast; you may even be going in the wrong direction.

I tend to agree with that particular comment. This government has got to slow down, has got to figure out what it wants to do, and it has to stop moving according to ideological principles strictly. All governments are ideological, and I don't want to make the argument that they shouldn't be, but they have to stop moving strictly on ideological principles and start looking at the practicality about how they make their changes happen, not just shoot first and ask questions later. In the end, who will suffer? It will be the taxpayers, the citizens of this province, the very people this government says it pretends to represent. I submit they don't, and all they're doing is making matters worse.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Questions or comments?

**Mr Hudak:** I am pleased to respond to the member for Cochrane South's remarks. I disagree with part of his conclusion, in particular where he talked about this being ideologically driven, that we're running off in some direction as fast and as far to the right as possible. That's not right at all. It's completely the opposite.

We're moving because we're caught in a bog of competing government services that we inherited from 10 years of mismanagement. To get out of this mire, working with our municipal partners, we have to make decisions to get municipal programs and health programs back on solid footing. We want a government that is less confusing, that is more accountable, that delivers the highest-quality services possible to the taxpayer. We need to get out of this mire where you have different levels of government providing the same services, 75% here, 25% there. "It's not me, it's the other guy." Taxpayers are frankly fed up with that kind of government. They want us out of this bog, and that's where we're moving. When you make these types of decisions, when you show that kind of vision that says we want to go to a higher ground, you start to see the payoff.

I would argue that in health care, making tough decisions that were left on the back burner for so many years, you're seeing the payoffs. Instead of going to the States for cardiac surgery, we'll have 1,500 more operations in Ontario for those needing cardiac care. Kidney dialysis patients who had to drive hundreds of kilometres for three hours of very difficult treatment now can get kidney dialy-

sis closer to home. Acquired brain injury survivors, those who were in traumatic car accidents and had to go to the States to get services, we're bringing those folks back home so they get care closer to home, closer to their families, and then under very difficult circumstances heal faster and better closer to home.

I fully expect, through making the tough decisions and enunciating that vision, working with our municipal partners, you're going to see the results of these changes very soon, with better services to the taxpayers, more accountability and finally getting their money's worth for their hard-earned tax dollars.

**Mr Bartolucci:** I'd like to comment on the remarks made by the member for Cochrane South and agree with what he said with regard to the pace and the acceleration with which this government is trying to implement the downloading initiative. I believe what happens when you move too quickly, and too stubbornly in many instances, is that you make the wrong moves. I think that's what the member for Cochrane South is saying, that you're moving too fast and you're not moving at a pace that's acceptable to the people of Ontario.

Let me make a few comments about the survey I conducted and some comments that people in Ontario have suggested. The mayor of Timmins said, "The city faces massive problems, not only this year but in the years ahead." The treasurer of the city of Sudbury said, "What's scary is what we don't know," and that's exactly what the member for Cochrane South is saying. An alderman from the city of Thunder Bay said, "To maintain the level of services that our citizens have become used to would amount to a 22% tax hike in the city of Thunder Bay," obviously something that is impossible for a council to implement. A Timiskaming child care worker suggests, "If the local taxpayer has to make a choice, that choice may not be in the best interests of children."

We all know it's important to manage dollars wisely. No one disputes that. We all know that streamlining is important. No one disputes that. But I suggest that the member for Cochrane South is giving you good advice: Slow down; reconsider; if you're going to do it, do it right.

2120

**Mr Len Wood (Cochrane North):** I just want to comment briefly on the member for Cochrane South, the excellent comments he made over the last 10 minutes or so on the fact that Mike Harris and his Conservatives are dumping on to all the municipalities. It's a tax grab that they're trying to take from all the property owners right across this province.

It doesn't matter whether you own your own home or whether you're renting an apartment, as they give the tax break to the wealthiest people across this province and shed their responsibilities for the services they were given. Whether it's ambulance services, OPP policing or any of the other services they're dumping on to the municipalities, municipalities are going to have to pick it up. It's one thing after another.

We know from the experience over the last six or seven months that this government is not able to get anything

right. They had to call an emergency session of the Legislature in January, a special winter sitting of the Legislature, because they made so many mistakes last year. In August they brought back the Legislature for a special emergency sitting because they had made too many mistakes over the last two and a half years. It shows in the polls. They've dropped in their popularity and it looks like they're going to drop right out of sight.

I know a lot of the things the member for Cochrane South is pointing out bear true right across the province. People are scared. They're starting to panic when they figure out that, because of what Mike Harris promised during the election campaign in 1995, property taxes could go up as much as 30%, 40%, 50% as we go into 1998 and 1999 when the municipalities are going to have to pick up all of these services. At the same time as they're amalgamating and getting rid of a lot of the mayors and reeves, we're going to end up with a whole new structure of municipal government. School boards are all going to be changed. It's in a mess.

**Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford):** It's a pleasure to get up and make a few comments on the presentation made by the member for Cochrane South. I think the most important part of the presentation was missed, and it's spelled out in the title of the bill. It's An Act to improve Services, increase Efficiency and benefit Taxpayers by eliminating Duplication and reallocating Responsibilities between Provincial and Municipal Governments. This bill does not deal with the financial impacts but with the process of putting that in place. I would point out that I think the financial impacts are very important and need to be discussed.

The member across the aisle discusses the cost of the programs that are going to municipalities in a vacuum and does not relate that to the education costs that will be coming off the municipal property tax base. I think if you balance the two, you will find that it is an equal trade or an equitable trade between municipal and provincial governments. It does reduce a lot of the duplication and overlap that presently exists in the delivery of services.

I think earlier in the evening there were some presentations made related to the former government's disentanglement process and how the municipal sector walked away from the table when they had almost reached a conclusion. I happen to have been on the other side of the table at that time and the reason the municipal sector walked away from the table was, at the end of the disentanglement process, the provincial government of the day decided they wanted a percentage decrease in the provincial share of the funding. The municipalities said: "You have told us all along this would be an equal trade and equal responsibilities for both levels of government and now you are turning the clock back and not doing that. If we cannot trust you to hold up your end of the bargain, we do not want to be part of that." That was why that was turned down. We think we have a better package today.

**Mr Bisson:** In reverse order, the member for Oxford tries to make the argument that his downloading exercise is revenue-neutral. I only rely on what I've seen and what

I saw myself at the AMO conference two weeks ago. When Minister Leach stood and said, "This is revenue-neutral," what did the AMO delegates do? They laughed. They said: "You've got to be kidding. We're the ones who are having to deal with this and we know it's not revenue-neutral." So who am I to believe, one minister or all of the municipalities in Ontario? When the Premier raised the same issue in his speech a day or two later, what did they do? They booed him, they hissed and they hollered and they did all kinds of things. It is not revenue-neutral. We know that. That's basically a myth that this government is trying to raise.

The member for Cochrane North raised the issue about how incompetent this government is and described that this government, in a number of situations, has had to recall the Legislature to fix up the messes they created because they couldn't manage the House well. I would add to what the member for Cochrane North said that that's the reason they put the rule changes in place. The government is incompetent and incapable of dealing with passing their agenda through this Legislature with the current rules. The NDP was able to do it, the Liberals were able to do it, and the Bill Davis government prior to that was able to operate under the current rules. You guys have got to change the rules because you're incompetent and you can't get your agenda through in the time you had. It's not our fault; it's yours if you're incompetent.

The member for Niagara South talks about the 10 lost years and that it's the government, strictly the government, that has to deal with the 10 lost years of the Liberals and of the NDP. I would remind the member for Niagara South, who invented welfare? Who invented the FBA system? Who invented the health councils? Who invented the health units? Who invented the hospitals that you're trying to dismantle? It wasn't the two governments over the last 10 years; it was your own Tory government that put them in place. If it was wrong then, don't blame us, for God's sake, when it comes to your own incompetence.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Further debate?

**Mr Terence H. Young (Halton Centre):** I think it's important to pause here tonight and take an overview of why we're making the changes that we are making. History has taught us that bureaucracies by their nature expand and grow. It's a worldwide phenomenon. We're overgoverned, we're overtaxed and everybody knows it. In Ontario, middle-class families pay out up to 65% of their income in various taxes. Many of them can't afford to save for their own retirement, can't afford to save for a family holiday or help their children save for college or university.

Governments take too much. They've encumbered people, they've stilted innovation, they've stilted risk, and in many cases they've discouraged people from working. Many people who have been creating jobs and working have given up, moved south or just stopped. So we have to find better and cheaper ways to provide services, and perhaps above all else, get rid of duplication.

I'd like to give you one example of duplication in a city in my own riding, Burlington, where they have not one,

not two, but five transit systems: Burlington Transit, Wheel-Trans, ambulance service, public school buses and separate school buses. Each one of those transit systems has its own administration department, its own payroll, its human resources department, its own finance, regulatory, planning and on and on. What we need, obviously, are efficient, integrated services.

If you look at the federal and provincial governments, the scene is even worse. It's not Who Does What; the voters and the taxpayers are trying to figure out who is in charge. So we have federal and provincial ministries that duplicate in labour, in health, in environment, mines and resources, and there is incredible duplication in many other areas, for instance in education and training, transportation, and the list goes on and on.

The need for Bill 152 and the purpose of Bill 152 is to assist in the smooth transfer of responsibilities to municipalities for programs and funding, in whole or in part, for a number of services that are best provided, most efficiently provided, at the local level.

The goal: Get rid of duplication, find savings for taxpayers, identify inefficiencies and keep costs down. We've set the example. We've already cut our internal operations by 30%, a difficult and stressful process but an absolutely necessary measure. Our first step in this whole process is that we've taken \$2.5 billion off the property taxes, which is half the cost of education, so the process should be called uploading. We've chosen to call it Who Does What because we think it gives a good handle to the voters on what we're trying to do, which is to get rid of duplication.

We know education taxes have gone up year after year. School board spending has gone up 98% in the last 10 years, yet the number of students has only gone up 16%. It's all about accountability.

I have talked to seniors in my own riding who have had to sell their homes because the property taxes kept going up and up. These are people who have lived by the rules, who have worked hard all their lives and contributed to society and paid taxes. Now they have to move out of their neighbourhood for something that is totally beyond their control, something they have no control over, which is big-spending school boards.

We had support; we had very broad support. Everyone told us, "Take school board spending, education costs, off the property taxes." We have done that. The challenge is to find \$2.5 billion worth of services that rightfully belong in the municipalities to make it an even trade, to make it revenue-neutral.

Those should be services that are close to the needs of the community. So municipalities will have full responsibility for social housing, and they know better their own economy. They know their own transportation system, they know their own employment situation and they know their own social service delivery. They are in a far better position —

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order. It is now 9:30, and the House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock tomorrow afternoon.

*The House adjourned at 2131.*

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO**  
**ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO**

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Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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## Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Première session, 36<sup>e</sup> législature

# Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

# Journal des débats (Hansard)

Wednesday 10 September 1997

Mercredi 10 septembre 1997



Speaker  
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Président  
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 10 September 1997

*The House met at 1332.  
Prayers.*

### MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

#### EDUCATION FINANCING

**Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury):** I hold in my hands yet another example of this government's vile attempts at justifying its agenda for education. The tabloid entitled *Putting Students First* is really only missing the sensational paparazzi pictures of the minister running away from classrooms, running away from students and running away from teachers to make this truly a quality imitation of a real piece of journalistic expertise.

Mike Harris's very expensive tabloid speaks volumes about what's not in it. I can't find anywhere where it says that Mike Harris cut funding for junior kindergarten. I can't find anywhere where it says Mike Harris slashed funding to adult education. I can't find anywhere in the journal where it says that Mike Harris reduced funding for literacy programs and for colleges and universities.

The minister claims that he puts students first, but he won't protect class sizes. He pays lip-service to it, but he won't protect class sizes. When I asked him to call my bill, which protects class sizes, he says it's simplistic.

Minister, I say your plan is non-existent. I would rather have a simplistic plan that works rather than one that isn't in existence. What is truly telling about this propaganda is that Mike Harris is trying to justify removing another billion dollars out of education on the backs of the students of this province.

I'll tell you right now, there should be three Rs: reject, refuse and return to the minister.

#### CANCER

**Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre):** All Ontarians should be concerned about a report published recently in the *Journal of Clinical Oncology* which warns that those Ontarians with cancer who live in families where the average annual family income is less than \$20,000 are much less likely to survive the full range of cancers than those whose income is \$40,000 per year. In fact, the higher the family income the more likely the patient is to survive.

"In poorer communities," the study says, "there is both an excess of cancer deaths and an excess of deaths from other causes," among lower-income groups. The study

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 10 septembre 1997

tracked 357,530 cases of cancer diagnosed in Ontario between 1982 and 1991.

This finding must give us pause because it flies in the face of our generally held belief that medicare has smoothed out the differences of mortality rates from diseases such as cancer based on income levels. Whatever the reasons for this disparity — and there are many suggestions about those possible reasons — the study is a heads-up call for all of us who value a universally accessible health care system. We must be sure this kind of disparity does not perpetuate itself or even increase as health care restructuring takes place across this province.

#### BOATING SAFETY

**Mr Allan K. McLean (Simcoe East):** Today I wish to notify the members of this Legislature that yesterday I tabled a private member's resolution, ballot 96, entitled *Boating Safety*.

The members in this House already know why we need boater safety certification in this province. Since 16.5% of Ontario is water, every member here with a lake or river in their riding has a boating or personal watercraft horror story to tell.

The public is very concerned over the increasing number of high-speed boats and personal watercrafts currently being operated by untrained operators and children. Many operators do not understand the marine rules of the road and mistakes can sometimes be fatal. It is the general lack of knowledge and awareness of water safety precautions that leads to complaints related to boating operations.

I've worked since 1988 to bring boating safety legislation into Ontario. By safe boating I am not advocating licensing for operators. What I have been pushing for and aiming and still pushing for is boater safety certification.

The resolution I tabled yesterday is asking this Legislature to push the federal government to amend the *Canada Shipping Act, part II*, requirements for pleasure craft. These changes would require persons operating a motor boat or personal watercraft propelled by an engine of more than 10 horsepower on Ontario waterways to have a boater safety certificate.

I look forward to presenting my resolution in full tomorrow at 11 am.

#### FERRY SERVICES

**Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands):** Later today I will be presenting in the House a petition of great importance to a great many people in my riding. It's signed by 730 people, the vast majority permanent resi-

dents of the island communities, and asks the province to substantially fund the construction of a bridge between the islands and the mainland.

This government has backed the island communities into a corner. Mike Harris has created an untenable position by saying he will end all provincial subsidies and force them to take on the responsibility for the ownership, operation and maintenance of the ferries. They have asked islands with a combined tax base of \$800,000 to shoulder a \$4 to \$5 million cost. Property taxes would have to increase 338%, which is total insanity.

Islanders are terrified that the ferry costs, on top of the added downloading responsibilities for policing that they don't get and ambulance service, could very well bury them under a burden of debt and kill the opportunities for the communities to prosper.

The people affected are not tourists. These are permanent residents, some of whom have families that have lived on these islands for over 200 years. Have a look at the August edition of *Farm and Country* if you want a snapshot of how the farmers on Wolfe Island are affected. Already the prospect of ferry downloading has caused property values to drop by a third.

Mike Harris, I ask you once again, reconsider your position to download these enormous financial responsibilities. The islands are willing to pay their fair share, but with a small tax base and few financial resources, they cannot possibly handle these tremendous costs on their own. You are killing Ontario communities that have been in existence for over 200 years.

1340

#### MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

**Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South):** Yet again this government is demonstrating that they are moving so fast they're forgetting to pay attention to the finer details of how to implement their policies.

We know that this government is an ideological right-wing government which believes it is going to offload a number of responsibilities on to municipalities in an attempt to balance its books. But what's the cost of doing that, other than the cost to local property taxpayers who are going to have to foot the bill? It means in a lot of cases in communities across this province a number of services that used to be paid for by the province will no longer be able to be absorbed by the municipal councils across the province. What is the cost of that?

Let's just take a look at the issue of what it means to the youth of this province. In their zeal to deal with this issue in a way that's really not thought through, they are going to be putting in jeopardy and, I would argue, eliminating entirely programs that deal with youth when it comes to substance abuse, suicide prevention and teen counselling when it comes to the health councils of the province.

This government has to learn that whatever it does in its ideological drive to change the face of Ontario, it must

take the time to make sure those changes work and to make sure they're done in a methodical way so that they don't end up making the kinds of mistakes that they're making now, putting our system into failure and, I would say, adding one other crisis to the province.

#### KUNTZ ELECTROPLATING

**Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener):** I've often stated in this House that the number one priority of this government is and must continue to be to establish a positive business environment in the province of Ontario, an environment which encourages the private sector to flourish and to expand, resulting in the creation of jobs.

There is a direct parallel between the number of new jobs created in the private sector and a reduction in the number of people on welfare, an increase in the number of people who pay income taxes, an increase in the number of people who are able to support their families and an increase in the number of people who gain a greater sense of dignity.

The true fighters against poverty in this province are those private sector employers who are creating new jobs in the province. I stand today to recognize an outstanding corporate citizen in the Kitchener area, Kuntz Electroplating, a family-owned and -operated company.

In the past three years this family business has created 350 new jobs, doubling its staff to 700 employees. It is a company which was recently honoured by its peers for its nickel recycling efforts, having formalized their recycling department several years ago and now recycling more than 70% of the solid waste produced at the plant.

In August Kuntz Electroplating's efforts were honoured by the metal finishing pollution prevention project, a government and industry task force made up of federal and provincial environment ministries and top industry experts.

I know I speak on behalf of the assembly when I say to the Kuntz family, I send you our best wishes for your continued success.

#### FESTITALIA

**Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East):** I'm pleased to advise the House that last week in Hamilton we had the opening ceremonies of the 22nd annual Festitalia activities. This is a month-long festival that has been a tradition in the city of Hamilton and it will continue to be for many years to come.

The chair, Margherita Lawlor, and her committee have once again put together a great month of festivities. This includes a performance of Don Giovanni by Opera Hamilton, a *Vino e Amore* night, which, in effect, is the biggest Italian wedding in North America, at the Convention Centre, and one of the highlights, of course, is the regional dinners. This is where clubs from the various regions of Italy put on a dinner traditional to that region and it is well attended. These clubs include Pettorano Sul Gizio, the

Donnici Club, the Venetian Club, Famee Furlane, Santa Croce di Magliano, the Abrussese Club, the Alpini Club, the Pugliese Club and the Sons of Italy. These are great evenings of great dinner enjoyment for all.

There is a soccer tournament and a film night. It's a month of activities that allow the whole city, the region and many people across North America to share in the Italian culture and the Italian way of life, to enjoy the food, the wine and the goodwill and cheers that are offered up by many.

The board of directors, the Italian community, the city of Hamilton and the region of Hamilton-Wentworth look forward to this every year as a great font of festivities. I want to congratulate the board, the chair and all of the member clubs for their great work in making Festitalia the greatest Italian festival in Hamilton.

[Remarks in Italian]

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Member for Dovercourt.

Point of order?

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker:** If you have a point of order, you have to wait for your mike to come on and then you make your point of order so I can hear it.

**Mr Garry J. Guzzo (Ottawa-Rideau):** I was questioning whether or not you can hear in that left ear. That was all. I know you can hear in the right ear; I was wondering whether you could hear in the left ear, sir.

**The Speaker:** Member for Ottawa-Rideau, that wasn't funny. I assume it was meant for humour. It wasn't funny. That's certainly not a point of order, and I think you should be cautious in the future.

## PAY EQUITY

**Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt):** I want to rise today to call upon the government to respect the decision that was recently handed down by Ontario Justice Dennis O'Leary regarding the proxy pay equity issue.

This is a decision that reinstates the right of some 100,000 women across the province to have the right that was given to them in law in 1993 by a government I was proud to be a member of that ensured that the lowest-paid women in the province also saw the benefits of pay equity, something that did not exist up until that point and something which Mike Harris and his government wanted and chose to take out, chose to remove, as they did last year, and which now the courts have said is wrong.

Those women, just like all of the other women who have benefited in the past from pay equity, also need to see that their rights as women are defended and respected, and given particularly that they are among the lowest-paid workers in the province, that they continue to be at the forefront of those people who receive this basic protection.

I was proud back in 1993, as the Chair of Management Board, to have the responsibility within our government for coordinating the efforts that led to the proxy pay equity legislation being introduced by our then Minister of Labour.

Again, I urge the government to respect the court decision and to take heed of the words that were given by the justice in recognizing that this is a basic right these women need to continue to have.

## CHRIS HADFIELD

**Mr Dave Boushy (Sarnia):** This past weekend I attended a major event that reminded me why I'm so proud to live in my community. Chris Hadfield visited Sarnia, where his parents live and where he went to school. A crowd of thousands came out to greet Chris Hadfield, the Sarnia-born astronaut who is the first Canadian to walk in space. Our local airport was renamed in his honour and is now known as the Sarnia Chris Hadfield Airport.

Our special guest was most gracious in sharing his experiences with the excited crowd. As he told us how he dreamed of being an astronaut when he was just a small boy in Sarnia, we were all reminded that our own dreams for the future can come true if we believe enough to put in the effort.

Sarnia has the right ingredients to be many things to all people: the Hadfield airport, a tourist destination, an efficient transportation corridor, a base for new investment and a place of opportunity.

Chris Hadfield brought home to us an important reminder: If we have the courage to follow our dreams, we will achieve wonderful things.

I would like to thank Joan Link, the chair of the Hadfield event. Joan and I ran in the last provincial election. She's a good friend of mine and she is also a friend of the honourable Lyn McLeod. She did a fantastic job. Thank you, Joan, for a job well done.

## VISITOR

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** I would like to take this opportunity to introduce in the west gallery Jack Riddell, the ex-member for Huron-Middlesex. Welcome.

## STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** I beg leave to inform the House that today the Clerk received the 43rd report of the standing committee on government agencies. Pursuant to standing order 105(g)9, the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

1350

## GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING PUBLICITÉ GOUVERNEMENTALE

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** Mr Speaker, on a point of privilege: In compliance with the new rules of the Legislature, forced on this Legislature by the government, I gave you notice of a point of privilege that I

would be raising this afternoon, as I am now required to do. I note that at the time it said:

"In compliance with the changes recently made to the standing orders for the Legislative Assembly, I wish to bring the following matter to your attention: The Minister of Education, the Honourable John Snobelen, has announced that the Ontario government intends to proceed with an advertising campaign which will cost the taxpayers of the province approximately \$1 million."

Upon reviewing the information that the government is communicating with the public — it's found in this particular document and on this tape being provided to television stations across the province — I would put forth that it constitutes an abuse of public funds for the purpose of partisan gain. The information does not constitute an important public announcement, but instead puts forth a self-serving political message clearly designed to influence public opinion.

I also wish to raise the question of fairness in regard to this matter. While there would be no objection to this advertising campaign if the Conservative Party were funding its costs or if it were to come out of the funds of the Conservative caucus, this is not the case. The government is spending public funds in order to communicate what I consider to be a blatantly political message, these funds and resources to which the opposition has no access.

Upon appropriate consideration of your jurisdiction and a review of the advertising material, I would ask you to consider whether this constitutes a breach of parliamentary privilege. I would put to you that it does, as the advertising campaigns relate to matters currently before the House as well as the legislation the government has announced it intends to introduce.

Mr Speaker, the reason I thought it would be appropriate to raise this is that you will recall that in a previous ruling you made on January 22 this year, you said the following:

"I say in all candour that a reader of that document" — this was a document put out by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs — "could be left with an incorrect impression about how parliamentary democracy works in Ontario, an impression that undermines respect for our parliamentary institutions."

Further, you said:

"On a separate but related matter, the member for St Catharines expressed concerns on Tuesday of last week about the unequal access to advertising resources as between the government and the opposition. He asked whether the Speaker had any jurisdiction to restrict the government from disseminating allegedly self-serving, partisan advertising.

"At this point in my ruling, I want to express some personal concerns about the propriety of public funds being used to advocate, through advertising, a particular position on a matter that is before the House. Let me be clear: I am not speaking here about politically paid-for advertising but rather about funds that are contributed to by every Ontar-

ian, regardless of his or her political view. Personally, I would find it offensive if taxpayer dollars were being used to convey a political or partisan message. There is nothing wrong with members debating an issue and influencing public opinion; in fact, it is part of our parliamentary tradition to do so. But I feel that it's wrong for a government to attempt to influence public opinion through advertising that is paid for with public funds."

That, in a capsule, is my objection in my point of privilege to what is going on with the government, that once again it is embarking upon a public relations campaign using tax dollars, using resources which are available only to the government and not to all members of the House. If the Minister of Education wanted the Conservative Party to pay for this, I would not be able to stand in this House and object. One could even make a case for the Conservative caucus bureau putting forth information of this kind without objection. But it is clearly unfair in our parliamentary democracy for this to happen. I submit as well that many of the matters referred to in the document and in the tape are matters that have not been completely disposed of in this House.

**Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Government House Leader):** On this point of privilege, I will say that the newsletter that is going out to the people of Ontario is simply an attempt by the government to convey very important information to the people of Ontario. The people have every right to know some of the basic facts that pertain to an important service such as education in the province; indeed, most people demand to know this kind of information.

The ministry has put together a very simple, black-and-white piece of information which doesn't presuppose anything, which simply conveys information, information that the people of Ontario have every right to be aware of. The cost of 12 cents for each copy is minimal. If some of the members opposite are saying that the people of Ontario have no right to this sort of information, I think the remainder in this House would take issue with that approach.

Mr Speaker, I also bring your attention to a publication from the previous government —

*Interjections.*

**Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance):** Look who's talking, the guys who ran the debt up to \$100 billion. Look who's talking. You doubled spending and tripled the debt.

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Order. I would ask the opposition to come to order, and the Minister of Finance as well, please. Thank you.

**Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon):** — in two weeks at Ontario Hydro. It looks good on you.

**Hon Mr Eves:** Look who spent that money at Ontario Hydro.

**The Speaker:** Member for Lake Nipigon, order. Minister of Finance, order.

**Hon David Johnson:** I bring your attention to a publication from the previous government, the NDP government, which did exactly the same thing, with a couple of differences. One is that the publication from the former government, the NDP government, contained both a photo and a message from the minister. This publication today, from this government, contains no message, no photo of the minister. The publication from the NDP is obviously more expensive in that there are more colours involved. The message from this government: straight, factual information, no political information, no message from the minister in a political context, and it's in black and white.

It's interesting that the Liberals have raised this issue, because the Liberals in their last year, 1990-91, spent over \$22 million in ministry advertising, over \$22 million. This government, through the ministries, spent less than half of that amount in terms of advertising. It's still necessary to communicate to the people of Ontario, but we have done it at less than half the cost of the Liberal government in what they spent to advertise in 1990-91.

**Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma):** On the point of order, Mr Speaker: Obviously, it's a bit silly for the government to claim that because the minister's visage is not part of this, it is not propaganda.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** I want to ask the House to come to order. These are points of order. They are directed at the Chair so I can hear them in order to make an informed decision. I ask those behind the Speaker and those on the other side of the chamber to please come to order. I ask the member to address his remarks through me.

**Mr Wildman:** Speaker, I hope you will consider the document and will look at page 6 in particular, where it says, "Focusing Dollars on the Classroom," and goes on to say that the government has a new approach, that there will be the same level of funding for each student enrolled in their schools across Ontario, but does not deal with what that level will be. If the government House leader says there wasn't a message — the main issue that concerns parents and people interested in education across the province today is missing from this document.

Yet the government House leader claims we shouldn't be concerned about it because it's not very costly, when in fact it costs 12 cents a copy, which for 4.2 million households works out to about half a million dollars. At the same time, the government is also running a television ad. According to the minister's own information given out yesterday, they have already spent \$485,000 on that media buy. So in total we're talking about \$1 million at a time when this government says they don't have money for education in the classroom and they're taking \$1 billion out of education.

1400

**The Speaker:** I think we've reached the stage of debate. We're not into points of order.

Member for Cochrane South, you're getting up on a point of order. I ask you to stick to the point of order.

**M. Gilles Bisson (Cochrane-Sud):** Je vais être très court. Je pense qu'il y a deux points importants ici. Le

premier point, c'est que le gouvernement essaie de nous faire croire que ce document n'est pas un document politique. Moi, j'aimerais dire que c'est bien un document politique. Ce qu'ils essaient de faire essentiellement avec ce document, c'est deux choses.

Premièrement, ils essaient de convaincre le public qu'il y a une crise dans le système d'éducation de l'Ontario. C'est quelque chose, on sait, que le ministre de l'Éducation lui-même a essayé de nous faire croire à beaucoup de reprises depuis que son gouvernement a été élu.

Deuxièmement, ils essaient de rassurer le public que leur agenda idéologique ne va pas diminuer la qualité de l'éducation, encore un message politique.

Je pense que l'autre affaire, en conséquence, c'est que le gouvernement conservateur a ôté tous les droits à tous les députés de l'opposition pour être capables de communiquer avec leurs citoyens et la population ontarienne en coupant tous les budgets des députés, mais eux, ça pense fin utiliser un million de dollars de l'argent public, du budget ministériel, pour faire quoi, essentiellement? Communiquer un message politique.

**The Speaker:** Member for Sudbury.

**Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury):** This is a different point of order.

**The Speaker:** Can I stick with this one?

**Mr Bartolucci:** Absolutely.

**The Speaker:** Member for Fort William.

**Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William):** I'll be brief. I would think, as you examine this point of privilege raised by my colleague, that you might want to use a standard of judgement as to whether it's an appropriate expenditure for a Ministry of Education, in the name of having to inform the public of something that is a public service, as to whether or not there is indeed information.

If you look closely at it, I think you will find there is no information contained in this particular flyer, let alone in the very brief television ad, that is not being conveyed much more fully and more readily to parents at the local school level. You'll find that this is pure political advertising and nothing else.

**Mr Garry J. Guzzo (Ottawa-Rideau):** And not the truth either.

**The Speaker:** Member for Ottawa-Rideau, you have to withdraw that statement. That's out of order.

**Mr Guzzo:** My comment was that the propaganda —

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** With the greatest respect, I want to hear it because maybe I misheard you, but I don't think I did. Go ahead.

**Mr Guzzo:** I believe you did, and if you'll allow me, my statement was that the propaganda being handed out at the school level was not the truth.

**The Speaker:** I apologize. I thought you said what the member was saying.

**Mr Guzzo:** I would never say that of a member.

**The Speaker:** Okay.

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker:** I want to rule on this point of order first.

**Mr Peter L. Preston (Brant-Haldimand):** Point of privilege.

**The Speaker:** Point of privilege, you're right, sorry. On this point of privilege.

With the new rules, the member for St Catharines did give me the point of privilege previously — this morning, as a matter of fact — and allowed me the opportunity to review it before coming here today. I took the opportunity of reviewing the brochure or small newspaper or whatever it is that was handed out by the Ministry of Education.

The fact is, it's quite simple: If it's a point of privilege, it's got to be a point of privilege. You have to outline contempt. You have to show where it is that your privileges are being usurped, in essence.

Your argument being that it isn't balanced and reasonable or it isn't fair and the government has advantages that the opposition doesn't have when it comes to reporting to the people of the province of Ontario: Whether or not that's true is academic. I, as Speaker, don't have any power to determine whether or not something is balanced or reasonable or information-based or not.

I think I was fairly clear when I ruled on the Ministry of Municipal Affairs. I find that if anyone is using government money to purport to be providing information that is clearly partisan in nature, I find it reprehensible — that is just my personal opinion — whether it's this government or previous administrations. I will say categorically, having sat in this place on both sides of the House, that I think we were all — all the administrations — guilty of this at one time or another.

It's not going to be up to me to make that decision or call, simply because I don't have that power, nor should I have that power. It's going to have to be up to the people of the province of Ontario to make that decision and they're going to have to determine what they consider to be acceptable and not acceptable. You can't look to the Speaker to make those decisions. I can't, nor do I want to.

The only thing I can look to is whether or not there is contempt. I reviewed the Ministry of Education's brochure. There was no contempt I could find. There was nothing out of order about it, there was nothing that was rendering this place secondary by nature, so I would rule that your point of privilege is not that.

**Mr Bartolucci:** Point of order, Mr Speaker: I'm seeking unanimous consent for second reading of Bill 156, which is An Act to amend certain statutes with respect to The Regional Municipality of Sudbury, to allow for election of the chair by the people of the regional municipality of Sudbury.

**The Speaker:** Agreed? No.

Introduction of bills.

**Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Can I ask you, does Hansard record the fact that the government members voted against it or is it simply recorded as —

**The Speaker:** No, I just seek unanimous consent. If there's a no, there's a no. They don't record who the noes are.

**Mr Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I believe we missed item two, reports by committees.

## REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

### STANDING COMMITTEE ON ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE

**Mr Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge):** I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on administration of justice and move its adoption.

Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill 102, An Act to improve community safety by amending the Change of Name Act, the Ministry of Correctional Services Act and the Police Services Act / *Projet de loi 102, Loi visant à accroître la sécurité de la collectivité en modifiant la Loi sur le changement de nom, la Loi sur le ministère des Services correctionnels et la Loi sur les services policiers.*

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? No.

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

I declare the motion carried.

The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

## INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

### MARRIAGE AMENDMENT ACT, 1997 LOI DE 1997 SUR LE MARIAGE

Mr Bob Wood moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 157, An Act to amend the Marriage Act to provide incentives for pre-marriage education / *Projet de loi 157, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le mariage et prévoyant des mesures d'encouragement à la préparation au mariage.*

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Wood, a short explanation?

**Mr Bob Wood (London South):** This bill provides for a waiting period of 45 days for a marriage licence. This period will be reduced to five days for couples who take a marriage education course.

The bill is based on a growing body of social science research in this field. It is intended to help couples approaching marriage to build relationship skills vital to strong and enduring marriages. It is my hope that this bill will make a significant contribution in reducing the human and social costs of failed marriages and help to strengthen Ontario's families.

*Interjections.*

**Mr Bob Wood:** We hear that some find this to be a light matter, Mr Speaker, but I don't. I think it's quite serious.

1410

## ORAL QUESTIONS

## TEACHERS' COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

**Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William):** My question is for the Minister of Education. For the last three days, teachers have been in meetings with representatives of your government. They were there at your invitation. They came despite the tremendously provocative nature of the proposals that you had made to them. They came because they felt they owed it to their members and to students to hear what you had to say. Last night at 9:30 pm your representatives walked out. Why did your representatives walk away from the table, and why are you so determined to force a confrontation with Ontario teachers?

**Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training):** My information is that the representatives from the Ministry of Education, who were engaged in conversations with people who represented the unions for teachers in Ontario and the boards of education in Ontario — that set of consultations had taken three days — did not walk away from the table. If the member for Fort William has any information that they did cut off these talks or end these talks in some way early, if she has any information that would indicate that whatsoever, please send it over, because that is not what has been represented to me as what happened.

I believe there was a very fulsome conversation about issues that are important to education with teachers and with board representatives and I look forward to reviewing all of those talks and all of those consultations over the next few days, because I think that's important for the bill that we will be bringing to this House.

Once again, in direct answer, my information is that the officials from the ministry did not break off these talks. If the member opposite who has made that accusation today in this chamber has any information that would indicate that, please send it over.

**Mrs McLeod:** The minister is either misinformed or he is deliberately ignorant of what happened last night. Minister, you want the facts. The facts are that when one side has a proposal on the table and the other side walks away, the side that walks away has broken off the negotiations. Last night it was your representatives.

The teachers were at that table in good faith. They knew your goal; you had made it very clear. They knew your goal was to take more than \$1 billion out of education. They knew you were more concerned with getting to the lowest possible cost than with meeting the needs of students. They were told you wanted more than the \$1.3 billion I thought you were looking for; they were told you wanted \$1 billion more on top of the \$500 million you have already taken out of education.

They didn't agree with your goals, but they were willing to try and find ways to meet your cost targets without hurting students. They were prepared to use pension funds

to meet your savings target, if that was the only way to avoid disruption in the classroom. Why would you walk away from negotiations with teachers who were trying to find ways to save money without —

**Hon Mr Snobelen:** The member for Fort William, I asked you in my response to your first question to provide any substantiation of the allegation you've made here. You haven't offered any substantiation of that. I suppose you think that your role here is to stand up and make whatever allegations you'd like to make, without substantiation, day in, day out, even if that comes at the cost of the education of children in the province. That's not something I can support.

I can tell you this: You were right in this one sense: that there was good faith shown by everyone who attended those meetings, everyone who had a discussion about our goal, which is their goal, and that is to have the students of Ontario outperform students in every other province in Canada and to do that as quickly as we possibly can. That's our goal; that's what we were there talking about. I'm glad we had the opportunity to do that with teachers and with boards.

**Mrs McLeod:** Minister, you went to those same teachers less than a month ago and you said, "Let's drop the rhetoric and let's deal with students' needs," and they wanted to believe that you meant that you were going to drop the rhetoric and deal with students' needs. They went to that table for three days; they didn't like your intention, your clearly non-negotiable goal of taking another \$1 billion out of education, but they wanted to do everything they could to avoid a confrontation and to protect the students in the classroom.

Whatever you say, it is so clear that you are determined to have a confrontation with teachers. You are determined to cut \$1.5 billion from education. You have made that a non-negotiable goal. You are determined to take your savings on the backs of teachers. You've set out impossible conditions for bargaining. It is students who are going to pay the greatest price for your determination to find dollars to pay for Mike Harris's tax cut and you won't want any solutions because you want to do permanent destruction to classrooms in this province.

Minister, before it is too late, will you drop your non-negotiable hard line? Will you set aside your impossible conditions? Will you work with teachers so that students' needs can be protected in this province?

**Hon Mr Snobelen:** I want to confirm that I did go down to Niagara-on-the-Lake a few weeks ago. I did ask the heads of the teachers' unions in the province to drop the rhetoric, to chill things out, to come in and meet with us and talk about how we improve the system together. In fact, that's what precipitated the meetings that we have just had with the teachers and the boards, to talk about how to do that. I intend to take those deliberations seriously, I intend to review what they had to say seriously, because I think it's important.

You speak of empty and meaningless rhetoric. The only empty and meaningless rhetoric we've heard over the course of the last week on education is from the member

for Fort William. I think it's a sad display for an elected representative.

### SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

**Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition):** My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. A couple of days ago I had the opportunity to make a home visit together with a children's aid society worker. I visited a young mother who was raising three children on her own. She lives in an apartment for which she pays \$800 a month. She had been receiving \$1,500 welfare monthly. Under your changes, after your cuts, she's receiving about \$1,100 a month.

She struggles valiantly against cockroaches, mice and head lice. She tells me that she has no phone because she can't afford it. It was the eighth day of the month on which I visited her, so I said, "Do you mind if I look inside the kitchen cupboards and inside the fridge?" I can tell you, if you and I had looked inside those cupboards and that fridge together, we would both say: "There's no food in the house. You've got to go shopping." This was the eighth day of the month.

Do you understand, Minister, what you're doing to young mothers who are making valiant efforts to raise their kids on welfare in Ontario?

**Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services):** Many parents, whether they're on social assistance, whether they're in a low-income job, face many challenges in trying to raise their kids. One of the reasons we think it's so important to help those parents get jobs, get into the workforce, one of the reasons why we think it's so important to have those jobs there for them is so they can do that, because we know that's what they want to do and we know that they and their kids are better off if they have those jobs.

I would agree with the honourable member that we know more needs to be done, because we know where those parents want to be. The experts will tell you where those kids are better off: if their parents or parent is in the workforce. That is what has been driving many of our reforms, because I would agree with the honourable member that this mother does indeed need additional help.

**Mr McGuinty:** Minister, you care for these mothers and these children so much that you cut \$400 worth of welfare from them. That is a tremendous display of love and affection for them.

This mother, by the way, has got lots of initiative. While she has been on welfare she has completed her grade 12, her OAC and her first year of university. But now she can't. This year, for the first time, she can't continue her post-secondary studies because you've changed the OSAP system. This year she would have to borrow the equivalent of \$30,000 in order to continue her education because as a welfare recipient, if she wants to go to school, she's going to have to get off welfare. She'll have to borrow for her accommodation, her day care and her tuition fees and whatever else she might need. She is absolutely terrified of putting her family into debt to the

tune of 30 grand a year to meet those expenses, so she's going to be pursuing her studies one credit at a time.

Do you understand that what you're doing is prolonging the length of time on which this family is about to live in poverty? Do you understand that, Minister?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** The goal I think, and I think you share this, if I may be so presumptuous as to say this — we don't want kids on welfare. We want to get them off social assistance. We want to help those parents who need the help who have high-risk kids and high-risk families. As the Minister of Education has said previously, one of the things we've been doing with universities and colleges is to make sure there are more resources there for those individuals on low income who need the help to get that education. That's why one of the things that is part of our employment programs is assistance for education needs, because we recognize that training is extremely important.

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That is very much part of the agenda that this government is trying to put forward. It's one of the reasons why we're working with Ottawa on the national child benefit, so that additional moneys can be available for us to help kids in high-risk families, because I agree that we need to do more. That's why we have done all the additional funding, all the changes we have made to accomplish that.

**Mr McGuinty:** Minister, you will know that I have put together a task force which is travelling to a number of Ontario communities and we are looking for ways to meet some of the challenges that our children are facing day in and day out in this great province of ours.

One of the things that we are fast learning is it's not any one particular item of the Harris agenda that's hurting kids, it's the whole agenda. It's things like the gutting of rent control, hiking of tuition, changes to OSAP, cuts to children's aid.

Do you know what this mother also told me? She relies heavily on the fact that she can go to her community centre, she can get free swimming for the kids, she can get free access to the library. She is terrified that because of downloading she's going to have to start paying for those kinds of things, because she can't. It's those kinds of opportunities that keep her kids plugged into mainstream Ontario.

When are you going to start to realize that what you are doing, not only on your own as a minister but the entire Harris agenda, is causing serious damage to Ontario children?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** I would like to remind the honourable member that he is also hearing in these hearings that he is having across the province that there is no government that can go and brag about what it is doing or has done for children. What he is hearing are many, many long-standing problems in child welfare and in many other programs that are out there.

What we have been very clear about is that we want to take the resources that we have, the increased resources that we are putting into high-risk and prevention, the increased resources that we're putting into child welfare, the increased resources that we're putting into child care

— the list could go on because we know that children's services in this province need a lot of change because they haven't been meeting the needs of those kids out there who trust us to meet those needs.

I would challenge the honourable member to disagree with one of the reforms that we have going on in child welfare. We've consulted the experts, we're doing what they say needs to be done to protect those kids. That's what they're telling him in his task force, and if he disagrees with them, I challenge him to —

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** New question, third party, member for Algoma.

**Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma):** In response to the minister, we might all challenge the fact that —

**The Speaker:** No, your question is to, member for Algoma?

### TEACHERS' COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

**Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma):** My question is on education to the Minister of Education and Training, and I might challenge the fact that sole-support parents now cannot get welfare. They must depend on OSAP and increase their debt load.

I'd like to ask the Minister of Education and Training about a very serious situation that faces this province today, students and parents, people interested in education across Ontario: the possibility of a serious disruption in education. I don't want to be accused of dealing with hollow rhetoric, so I'll ask the minister a specific factual question.

Can the minister confirm that in the negotiations his representatives said that it was non-negotiable, that the government would take an additional \$1 billion out of education, that the government wished to take that out by changing and limiting teacher preparation time and that would mean that the students of Ontario would have a total of 6,000 fewer teachers in the province?

**Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training):** I was not at the negotiations, to be clear to the member for Algoma, the discussions. I can tell you that the representatives from my office would convey to the people who were in those meetings what this government's non-negotiable position is, and the non-negotiable position of this government is that we will accept nothing less than a better education system for the young people of Ontario. By that, we mean better performance on their test results in both pan-Canadian and international tests. We've made several moves to help to do that with the new curriculum, with our testing programs. That's what we stand for. That's what we're there for. We've also said very clearly that we intend to do that at a cost that represents value for the taxpayers of Ontario.

We are certainly willing to listen to any positions of anyone in education. We're willing to listen to the expert panels we've commissioned to tell us how much a high-quality education should cost. We're willing to listen to all of those people because we want to have an education system in Ontario that we can all be proud of.

**Mr Wildman:** I might be tempted to accuse the minister of hollow rhetoric. We could have found out what he just said in his pamphlet. He didn't answer my question, however. My question was specifically on matters that were raised in the negotiations.

I'll ask a further question then. Can the minister confirm that in the negotiations, the teacher federation representatives, taking the government's position that it was non-negotiable that they wanted to take the money out, offered to make the same amount of savings or similar amounts of savings by taking money out of the teachers' pension plan rather than out of the education of our kids? Can the minister confirm that?

**Hon Mr Snobelen:** I know that the conversations were wide-ranging. I know they dealt with a lot of issues inside of education. I do know that there was a discussion that involved pensions. I haven't read the full reports from the discussions, but I understand they involved the pension fund that is, as you know, a partnership between the Ontario Teachers' Federation and the government of Ontario.

Again, I'd like to emphasize to the member for Algoma that we are willing to listen to any proposal made by teachers or boards that will help to improve both the value of and the quality of education for our young people. We think it's important and we clearly are not negotiable about the outcome, which has to be a better education for our young people, but we're willing to talk about all the steps along the way.

**Mr Wildman:** If what the minister says is an accurate description of his position and the position of his negotiators, how can he explain the fact that the teachers' representatives offered to make similar amounts of savings compared to what he has asked for, but that it would not mean cutting the number of teachers teaching students or cutting their preparation time in which they prepare to teach those students? If he's really interested in the quality of education, why wouldn't he accept a proposal to achieve savings that would save teachers' job and ensure that they have adequate time to prepare to teach our students in Ontario?

**Hon Mr Snobelen:** Let me say to the member for Algoma, I have to tell you I'm very pleased that the teacher unions have embraced the need to provide education at a good value for the taxpayers of Ontario. I think it's important. They certainly have embraced that, and I thank them for their work and their participation.

Let me make this clear to the member for Algoma. I have not rejected any of the things that were proposed by people who represented boards or teachers in the province over the course of the last three days. I will be looking at all of those discussions, looking at the things that were proposed to us, and I want to get a chance to be briefed on that subject and also to reflect on it, because I believe that when you talk with people, you also have to listen. That's what we'll be doing over the course of the next few days: listening to proposals made by teachers and by boards to us over the last three days.

## PAY EQUITY

**Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale):** My question is to the Premier. Today we read in the Toronto Star that, "People across Ontario are cheering a court decision striking down one of the key moves Mike Harris has made against women." The judge found that your Bill 26 was unconstitutional when it tried to take money away from 100,000 of the lowest-paid women in the public sector in Ontario. As the Star says, "Justice O'Leary was also critical of the government's decision to act without reflection.... He said the government moved without regard to personal or social consequences and without consultation."

You aren't listening to what the people of Ontario are saying, but you should at least listen to the court. Will you announce today that you will accept this decision and live up to your obligation to make sure that women get fair pay for their jobs?

**Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier):** With all due respect, I'd suggest you ask the question instead of relying on the Toronto Star and opinions stated therein for government positions. I've found it an excellent newspaper but never found it to be, necessarily, the most reliable indicator of what this government is thinking or Mike Harris is thinking, or any government, for that matter.

We remain very strongly committed to the principles of pay equity. We continue to fund at a higher level than did the New Democratic Party when they were in power. So not only do we believe in the principles, we're putting more taxpayer dollars into those principles that are there.

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**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Answer, please.

**Hon Mr Harris:** I can assure the member we're looking at the court ruling, and actually more as to what implications it might have with regard to technical aspects of other things the government is doing. But let me assure you of this: We will continue to honour and support our pay equity commitments and —

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

**Ms Churley:** Let me say to you, Premier, that the Star's words I read out today I believe reflect what the people of Ontario are saying and thinking about this matter. The people of Ontario believe in fairness, and what you're doing here is unfair.

Let me tell you, this judge's report is very clear. It doesn't leave you any wiggle room. It's very clear.

When we asked your Minister of Labour what she had to say to the 100,000 women affected by this court decision, she said the government was considering an appeal, but after all, there were new jobs being created in the economy last month. That just shows that she doesn't get it and you don't get it. We're talking about women who have jobs. They have important jobs in child care, nursing homes, women's shelters and community agencies. We need them to do these jobs and they want to keep these jobs.

What these women are telling you is that they expect to be paid fairly, as the law and the Charter of Rights and

Freedoms guarantees. Why won't you listen to them and say today you will not appeal this decision?

**Hon Mr Harris:** We are listening to them. Regardless of whether we appeal or not, we're telling the agencies affected to honour the spirit of the judge's ruling and pay, as we are paying, just as we pay more than you paid with our employees.

**Ms Churley:** You keep saying that you are paying out more money than our party did. Let's be very clear here about what you're talking about: It's the 1% per year. You're paying money that has to be paid out. You haven't added any money to employment equity; in fact, you continue to take it away. You pay lip-service. You keep saying you support pay equity.

The Toronto Star has some more advice for you and I would suggest that you listen to it. It says Harris should "back off other punitive measures his government is proposing." It says the pay equity rollbacks in Bill 136, your attack on public sector workers, "clearly are unfair. By the standard of O'Leary's judgement, they may also be illegal."

The Star says the court ruling reflects public unease among the people of Ontario that your government "will forge ahead with policies that favour the privileged without regard to the consequences for everyone else." Isn't it time to start listening to the people and do what the voters of Ontario want? Be fair to the women of this province, Premier.

**Hon Mr Harris:** The member seems to have trouble taking yes for an answer. Yes, we'll continue to listen to the people of Ontario, if that's your second question.

## HEALTH CARE FUNDING

**Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South):** My question is for the Premier. I want to talk to you about an incident that took place in the Harris hospital system. This time it was at Peterborough Civic Hospital. You might recall that on February 5 Ed Whitehill died in the hallway of that hospital and your minister later tried to claim it was a situation made up by the staff of that hospital.

Today I want to talk to you about Mrs Shirley Littlefair. She will be 75 next month. She went to the emergency department in severe pain at 4 o'clock in the morning on August 4. She was finally discharged four days later. She spent her whole time in that emergency department. This 74-year-old woman spent her entire visit on a stretcher in the bright lights of the emergency room, in a draughty, noisy, public corridor. And guess what? She wasn't alone. There were always at least six other people there.

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Question, please.

**Mr Kennedy:** Will you direct your minister to stop the cuts that have made these conditions necessary? Will you tell him to stop insulting health care workers and instead —

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

**Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier):** When you look at all the statements that are out on the spending, we are substantially increasing funding for health care. I'm sure you don't want us to stop the increases. If that's your position, say so. If you have an individual case, if you'd like to send it over to us, I'd be glad to have the minister look into it for you.

**Mr Kennedy:** Premier, it was \$4 million you took from this hospital. The money you took put this woman in the hallway, gave her four and a half days in the emergency ward. When she had to use a bedpan in Mike Harris's Ontario, it was in full public view. If you're going to condone those conditions and dismiss them, maybe you'll listen to her husband. Her husband has written a letter which I'm going to send across to you. His comment is: "The Harris government is responsible for these conditions, because of the slashing of funds to hospitals. The wrong people are making important decisions about hospital funding, politicians instead of the people familiar with the real essentials."

The Harris government is responsible. You are responsible, Premier, for the deplorable conditions that you've put Mrs Littlefair in. Not long after her release, she fell and injured her hip; in fact she broke her hip. She wouldn't go back to the hospital. She respects the staff, but you've helped make her afraid of the conditions there.

Will you deal with this? Will you put the money back into Civic Hospital? And will you call Mr Littlefair and explain to him why the care has been reduced for his wife and why she spent four and a half days in a hallway in the emergency room?

**Hon Mr Harris:** Obviously, we will look into any individual situation. I think the member is aware that there is currently a clinical audit at the hospital, an operational review of the hospital. We'd be happy to look into this situation. If you have a letter, as you said you had — other than sending me across a clipping — I'd be glad to look at a letter from the member. Given your record on accuracy so far, in spite of the inaccuracy — and most of the stuff you give us is made up of fearmongering — I'll still look into it.

## PUBLIC HEALTH

**Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South):** My question is to the Premier as well. Your amendments to the Health Protection and Promotion Act provide that as of January 1, 1998, municipalities will be responsible for 100% of funding for all public health boards and their programs. One of the programs that's going to be affected in this download is what is called the northern regional genetics program, which is run in all of northern Ontario. This program basically allows for testing for cancer patients, leukaemia patients, people who have hereditary diseases, people who have reproductive problems.

From the discussions we've had with municipalities across northern Ontario, it's unlikely that they're going to have the capacity, because of your actions with the download, to take on the financial responsibility you're

handing down to them. I'm asking you as a northerner, will you ensure that the province of Ontario will maintain funding for this very important program to northerners? There are no other choices in the north.

**Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier):** I can absolutely guarantee you that we'll make sure they have the capacity to do so.

**Mr Bisson:** I take it we might have just won a victory. Did I understand you correctly? You're saying that yes, you will ensure that in northern Ontario the northern genetics program will be funded by the Mike Harris government after the downloading exercise?

**Hon Mr Harris:** I think I was quite clear. I will make sure that the dollars are available to do so.

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** New question.

**Mr Bisson:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'm shocked. It's the first time we've actually got an answer from the Premier. I thank him.

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## ONTARIO FILM INDUSTRY

**Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke-Rexdale):** My question is directed to the Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation. As you know, the Toronto International Film Festival is in full flight. It is a showcase of hundreds of excellent films made throughout the world, many of them in Ontario. My question pertains to job creation. I would like to know how the enhanced film tax credits that were announced first in the 1996 budget have created a number of new jobs and new film productions for both film and television in the greater Toronto region.

**Hon Marilyn Mushinski (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation):** Thank you to the honourable member for Etobicoke-Rexdale for his question. First of all I need to remind all members of this House that this government continues to spend close to \$200 million annually to foster and promote culture in this province. That's not just spare change; that's really the hard-earned money of taxpayers of this province.

What's even more important is that this government is committed to supporting arts in new and innovative ways. I've been saying that for two years, and the three new tax measures for the film industry, the television and computer animation industry and the publishing sector is proof of that commitment. With a budget of \$25 million, we also fund the Ontario Arts Council. That will be the major arts-granting agency for individual artists in this province.

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Answer, please.

**Hon Ms Mushinski:** What we need to do, however, is to change the way we do business. For example, does it make sense for an agency to spend \$1,000 —

**The Speaker:** Supplementary?

**Mr Hastings:** The supplementary pertains to, what are your future expectations in terms of job creation for the film and television production industries?

**Hon Ms Mushinski:** The culture sector generated 81,285 direct jobs in Metropolitan Toronto alone. In fact, Toronto has become North America's third-largest film

and television production centre, after Los Angeles and New York. It's also the third-largest theatre centre, after London and New York.

The question becomes, how do you continue to assist a growing and thriving industry like film development? Again I return to the tax credit initiatives as a fine example of the new approach to supporting arts and culture as an industry in this province. In fact, the Ontario film and television tax credit has received 82 applications to date, which represents \$13.3 million in credits.

### ONTARIO'S CREDIT RATING

**Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt):** My question is to the Minister of Finance. It has to do with Ontario's credit rating. He will know that five years ago Ontario had an AAA credit rating. It was downgraded over the period 1990-95 three times. At the time, Mike Harris called that a disaster. We now are two and a half years into the Harris mandate and it still is the same credit rating that Bob Rae had.

The question is this: Yesterday we heard from the auditor serious concerns about the impact on the credit rating of Ontario of Hydro's current position. Obviously, you've had a chance to ask your officials to assess this. Can you tell us what they've told you and what you can tell the public about the possible impact on Ontario's credit rating of the current situation at Hydro?

**Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance):** There is no possible impact at this particular point in time on Ontario's credit rating. As a matter of fact, the question that was asked by the member from Renfrew yesterday was talking about a statement that came out of Hydro on March 31 of this year. The credit rating agencies have all taken into account developments at Hydro, and after the Hydro report was released, all of them, as I'm sure he knows, reconfirmed Ontario's current credit rating.

**Mr Phillips:** I think the minister had better get himself informed about what is an important issue for the public of Ontario. Our credit rating costs literally tens of millions of dollars in extra interest costs with that credit rating. You said it had no impact. Here's what Standard and Poor's said: "Ontario Hydro's revised financial projection has the potential to push back the overall improvement in the province's credit profile." In other words, Standard and Poor's were very clear. They assessed it and they said in their opinion the position at Hydro does have an impact on the credit rating. For you to say otherwise frankly indicates you are not current with the credit rating.

I ask you again: Have your officials briefed you on this? What are they telling you about the potential impact on Ontario's credit rating? And can you confirm that the credit rating will cost literally tens of millions of dollars to the taxpayers of Ontario if we remain at the current rate?

**Hon Mr Eves:** I repeat to the honourable member, all the major credit rating agencies have said that the province's credit rating is not in danger as a result of Hydro's

recent announcement. Why didn't you read some of the other quotes?

*Interjection.*

**Hon Mr Eves:** He knew I would. Moody's, for example, after the Ontario Hydro report came out, said: "At this time the utility is expected to continue to service its debt without any provincial support. Moreover, the province is making significant inroads in reducing its budgetary deficit and stabilizing its debt profile."

You talk about cost to taxpayers in servicing the debt. I want to read to you the bond spreads between Ontario's 10-year bonds and Canada's: when you were in government, 38, 48, 50 and 54; the two years that we have been in government, those numbers are 23 and 14. Talk about costing Ontario taxpayers money.

### LABOUR DISPUTE

**Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre):** My question is to the Premier. I was with the strikers at PC World yesterday in Scarborough. These are strikers who have been on strike for eight months. They are standing up to an employer that is bringing in scabs to take away their jobs, scabs that you made legal under your Bill 7. They are standing up to an employer that has been found by the labour relations board to be bargaining in bad faith. This is happening all over Ontario. You are encouraging employers to take a hard line, to bring in scabs, to lower the wages and benefits of working men and women across the province.

Today the CAW has called on your government to appoint a special mediator-arbitrator to resolve this situation and, if necessary, they are prepared to submit to binding arbitration. Those strikers and the people of Ontario want to know whether you are prepared to direct your Minister of Labour to appoint such a mediator and resolve this dispute that you caused.

**Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier):** Let me first of all refer to the preamble about labour relations in the province of Ontario. In the period since Bill 7, we have had more labour peace than we did before Bill 7 under your government: 2,900 collective agreements, and 96% of them, covering about 420,000 workers, were renegotiated without strike or lockout. The year 1996 saw one of the lowest number of strikes in the last decade and 1996 saw the shortest average strike length in six years.

To indicate in your preamble that there is more labour strife now than there was with your government is incorrect. It is not true. The fact of the matter is, your stripping public sector workers of their democratic right to bargain and the actions your government took caused more labour strife than us restoring free collective bargaining to the process. Those are the facts.

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**Mr Christopherson:** No, Premier, those are not the facts. The fact of the matter is that you've loaded up bargaining against workers in favour of employers in every situation in this province. When you talk about labour peace, the OPSEU strike, which did lead to blood on the

streets, was the result of your Bill 7. You did that. The workers at PC World are not the only strikers, and I would remind you of the vision on TV last night of all those police officers ready to break that picket line because they have to enforce your Bill 7.

The workers at S.A. Armstrong, Premier, have been on strike for 17 months. Why? Because you've allowed scabs to be used in the province of Ontario and that's what's happening there. Your minister appointed a commission to look into that particular strike. She came up with some reasonable conclusions and some offers of resolving it. The union is prepared to accept those recommendations. Your minister refuses to appoint a mediator because the employer doesn't agree.

Premier, you caused this strike too. What are you going to do to resolve it?

**Hon Mr Harris:** Let me deal with the preamble because you phrase your question with information that is not correct. You gave the NDP the right to strike, and then you took away not only their right to strike, you took away their right to bargain. Now you're talking about the strike with OPSEU, and you're right. We did have a strike with OPSEU. You raised the issue. I don't know how it helps you in your campaign, but I want to say this: You took away not only the right of OPSEU to strike, after giving it to them, but the right to negotiate.

You're right. We did have a strike with OPSEU following which Leah Casselman said the government is fair and reasonable. Never did a representative of OPSEU, never did Leah Casselman say you or your government was fair or reasonable, I can tell you that.

#### WATER SUPPLY

**Mr Allan K. McLean (Simcoe East):** My question today is for the Minister of Environment and Energy. The people in my riding of Simcoe East are very concerned about the possibility of York region pumping 26 million gallons of water a day from Lake Simcoe to residential water taps in Keswick, Sutton, Newmarket and Aurora. That seems like an awful lot of water to me, and I can't help wondering what these historically important lakes and water systems which feed directly into the Great Lakes will look like in 20 years.

Minister, for those living around the lake, what studies are you doing to ensure that water levels will not be dramatically decreased by the proposed pumping station?

**Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Environment and Energy):** This is, I know, a very important issue to the people of Simcoe East, and it's an important issue to Ontario because water levels are very, very important to maintain. The region of York has completed a master plan for their long-term water needs, and in implementing this plan, the region followed the class environmental assessment process which requires consultation with the public and government agencies.

The plan recommends four steps which have further requirements under the Environmental Assessment Act. At this time, the proposals — and I say that plural — outlined

in the master plan are in the early stages of the planning process and each alternative requires different environmental assessment requirements.

The proposal to construct the water treatment facility at Lake Simcoe is in the preliminary stages of planning. Further environmental assessment requirements are needed, including an analysis of the environmental effects. There will be public and agency consultation. Everybody will have to do this before a green light is given to this kind of a proposal.

**Mr McLean:** I also have concerns for the Trent-Severn waterway which flows into Georgian Bay and becomes part of the Great Lakes system. Will your studies also look at the effect pumping this much water out of Lake Simcoe will have on the sister lake, Lake Couchiching, and the Trent system, which is apparently lower than usual? What assurances can you give the people of Simcoe East that no environmental damage will result from taking water from Lake Simcoe?

**Hon Mr Sterling:** I know how important tourism and this waterway is to the people of Simcoe East and I know of his concern about the environmental impacts of any change with regard to the water quality.

I want to emphasize to the member that this is only one of several alternatives put forward by the region of York to meet their water needs until the year 2031. This one alternative requires a water treatment facility on Lake Simcoe, but it will require further work under the Environmental Assessment Act. Prior to implementing this proposal, the region must ensure that the proposal has been reviewed by many government agencies, including the Trent-Severn waterway agency under Environment Canada, and that any potential environmental effects associated with this project will be mitigated.

The member should also be aware that there will be public consultation. I want him to be assured that the concerns of the people of Simcoe East about this very important environmental issue will be heard.

#### GASOLINE PRICES

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** I have a question for the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism, who I'm sure wants to protect the people of the province from gas prices that are increasing.

When I asked him the question before, he gave me an honest position of the government. He said, "Ontario motorists enjoy the most competitive prices, I think, in the world...I think overall Ontario is very well served." He said also, "If you travel across Canada, I think that the prices I see at the pumps...are quite fair." He went on to say, "We don't intend to dictate to companies what they should and should not do. I have no intention of interfering with the free-enterprise system, the pricing system. If we were to do that, we would be a laughingstock, sir. It would be a big mistake for this province. We would not attract business to this province."

You have within your jurisdiction, Minister, and you have important responsibilities in the government, the

opportunity to recommend to the cabinet that it implement, by passing in this Legislature, a bill prohibiting the predatory pricing practices of major oil companies; that is, selling their product to independents at a higher price than your own people. Are you prepared to recommend that to your cabinet colleagues today?

**Hon William Saunderson (Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism):** I'm very happy to respond to the member for St Catharines. As he is well aware, the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations is in Saskatchewan at the present time. He has taken to his meeting with his colleagues the resolution and the discussion that occurred I think last week. I don't have to say anything more because we're all waiting to hear how they respond.

I would point out that they will certainly make your colleagues in Ottawa aware of this concern we have and that I'm sure other provinces have too.

**Mr Bradley:** I'm glad to hear you point the finger somewhere else. Another Premier, in July 1975, who complained about high gas prices, actually took action in this House. Premier Davis, a Progressive Conservative, said on July 3, 1975:

"Today the government proposes to introduce an act to be known as the Gasoline and Fuel Oil Price Freeze Act, 1975...the bill imposes a temporary freeze on refined petroleum products sold in" Ontario." The freeze...will be for 90 days beginning midnight tonight subject to limited extensions by the Lieutenant Governor in Council if the assembly is recessed or not in session."

He went on to say, "I have met with the principals of petroleum companies that merchandise products in Ontario...the wholly legitimate interests of the consuming public must be served. It must be clearly established that all charges made by the oil companies not arising directly from the cost of crude oil itself are justified."

This is Premier Davis taking action in Ontario because he knows it's within his jurisdiction. Sir, are you prepared now to recommend that your government take similar action as the government took in 1975?

**Hon Mr Saunderson:** I would like to remind the member that just recently there was a chance for his party to allow a vote on the discussion and they refused that.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Order.

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## METROPOLITAN TORONTO REFERENCE LIBRARY

**Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt):** I hope I won't be disappointed by the answer that the Minister of Citizenship, to whom my question is directed, will give me. Minister, I want to ask you a question about public libraries. As you know, we went through third reading of this bill yesterday. I continue to be opposed, as many people are, to what you're doing by removing the protection for fees and removing citizen majority on library boards, but I don't

expect you to retrench on those two basic points. But there is one issue that you know we've continued to raise on the governance of public libraries and that is with respect to the Metropolitan Toronto Reference Library.

You know that there is overwhelming support for that board to continue to exist largely as it is presently structured; that is, separate from the others and not to be amalgamated with the other boards here in Metropolitan Toronto. Will you indicate today your willingness to accept or bring forward an amendment that would do just that, Minister?

**Hon Marilyn Mushinski (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation):** I thank the member for Dovercourt for the question. During the committee meetings on Bill 109 I think there was unanimous agreement on the important role the Metropolitan Toronto Reference Library plays both in the city and in the province. That's why we are going to continue to fund it and that's why we're making special provisions under Bill 148 to ensure that its special role is maintained.

The question of a separate Metro Toronto Reference Library board runs counter to the whole concept of the Who Does What exercise. The people of Ontario need simpler, more effective government. That's what they've asked for and that's what we've accommodated under both Bill 109 and Bill 148.

**Mr Silipo:** It sounds like I'm not going to be particularly pleased. I thought that where the minister was going was in fact to recognize what the whole library community has been saying, which is that the special nature of this library, which serves not just Metropolitan Toronto, as the minister knows, but indeed the province as a whole, warrants it also continuing to be governed through a separate board. That can still be done while maintaining the funding relationship that you wanted to maintain, both through the province and through Metropolitan Toronto, the new council to be set up. Indeed, it would be wrong if you persisted in tying it to the new structure of the other library boards in Metropolitan Toronto that you are going to amalgamate.

You mentioned Bill 148. Minister, I just ask you again, will you reflect on this and bring forward an amendment through the Bill 148 committee stage that will reinstate or maintain the present status of this library to be governed as a separate entity under a separate board and still within the context of the new megacity?

**Hon Ms Mushinski:** I think it's important for me to repeat that our relationship as a provincial government with the Metro reference library will not change as a result of Bill 109. That having been said, we have ensured under Bill 148 that a new Toronto Public Library Board be deemed to be a special library services board. That will then allow me, as the minister responsible for the Public Libraries Act, to continue the special funding relationship, as well as to call on that board to provide the resources and services that are specified by the province. That provision exists under the old Public Libraries Act and will continue under the proposed Bill 109.

## BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT AREAS

**Mr John O'Toole (Durham East):** My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. I've had many calls from small business operators in Durham East, as well as from mayors and members of business improvement associations who have contacted me regarding the elimination of the business occupancy tax, the BOT, which has been lost or cut with Bill 109 and proposed in Bill 149.

My constituents have advised me that they need the strength of a business improvement association. As a previous council appointee to the BIA, I know the important function of this voluntary group and the vitality they add to our downtowns. Can you advise me, the House today and my constituents, like Ron Hope, Ron Hooper and Murray Taylor, if you have any consideration to finding a way to save these volunteer boards?

**Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing):** I thank the member for Durham East for his question. I think everybody will recognize that this government took some positive action by eliminating the business occupancy tax. It was a tax that was opposed by both business and the municipalities as being very difficult to administer and an unfair tax. The BIAs, as we all recognize, receive their levies from that tax. The revenues that were collected by that tax will now be on the realty tax and the BIA levy will be applied to that realty tax.

In most instances, the lease arrangements that tenants have with the owners include the payment of tax, so there would be no difference in the assessment. Where the tenant is not responsible for the business tax, the BIA levy would be assessed against the owner. There shouldn't be any significant change to that very important function that the BIAs provide to the community.

**Mr O'Toole:** Thank you very much for those very encouraging comments. I have a further question that I would like to ask the minister. Our government is listening to our constituents. Will there be any changes in the upcoming new Municipal Act that will affect BIAs in any other ways?

**Hon Mr Leach:** Again I thank the member for Durham East for his very good question. As members of the House will know, the government is proposing to do a complete rewrite of the Municipal Act. We now have that in draft form and we intend to put that out to all of the major municipalities and stakeholders for comments in the very near future, probably in a matter of weeks; a rewrite, by the way, that has been asked for by municipalities for about the last decade. We're finally taking action to make sure the Municipal Act is rewritten. In that rewrite we will ensure that the government looks at the governance and operations of BIAs, to make sure that very important community function is protected and strengthened.

## TVONTARIO

**Mr Monte Kwinter (Wilson Heights):** I have a question to the minister responsible for privatization. On June

26, you announced that TVO would be put through a privatization review. The TVO board acknowledges that it has to manage change at TVO in a highly creative way. They have put forward a plan to change TVO from a government crown agency to an independent, not-for-profit corporation.

TVO has in recent years introduced efficiencies and entrepreneurial instincts that the private sector demands while at the same time supplying the quality of programming that only a non-commercial, public service television network can provide. This programming includes innovative educational services and important services to the francophone community.

Can you assure us that the proposal that was put forward by TVO will be given full and proper consideration by the office of privatization during their review of TVO? If I've only got one question, I would like to add, what kind of consultation process have you put in place to make sure that all of those who are interested in the wellbeing of TVO have a chance to express their views?

**Hon Rob Sampson (Minister without Portfolio [Privatization]):** To the honourable member across the floor, I'll try to answer the four questions that I think were included in there. I want to assure the member that part of the privatization review process we put in place in March of this year did have a role for Ontarians to play as far as consultation is concerned. We believe that in assessing the options before we make a decision about which particular route we go, we should hear from Ontarians. We intend to do that. As I said, we believe Ontarians have a role to play — somewhat different, I might say, from the privatization efforts executed by your government and the NDP government across the floor. We will listen to Ontarians. That is, with respect to TVO, something we definitely plan to implement.

## NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

**Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South):** Mr Speaker, on a point of order: I would like to give you notice under the standing orders that I'm filing a notice of dissatisfaction with the answer I had earlier from the Premier on the question of the northern genetics program. It would seem that the answer we got wasn't as clear we thought it was.

**Hon Noble Villeneuve (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs):** He just said he was very happy with it.

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** You know, Minister of Agriculture, I don't know what happened, so we'll have to just let that pass.

1510

## PETITIONS

## HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

**Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William):** I have a petition to the Legislature of Ontario.

"Whereas the undersigned residents living in the city of Thunder Bay in northwestern Ontario are in need of a new regional acute care hospital situated in the city of Thunder Bay to provide the said residents with quality health care services in a modern and up-to-date acute care hospital; and

"Whereas the partial renovation and restructuring of the existing Port Arthur General Hospital, a 65-year-old outdated and antiquated hospital building, proposed by the health services review commission and the Minister of Health for the province of Ontario will not be suitable, adequate or proper to provide such quality health care services to the said residents; and

"Whereas the undersigned residents endorse and support the Thunder Bay Regional Hospital and the trustees of the hospital board and their vision of a new centrally located hospital to serve the northwestern Ontario region;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario to reverse the decision and direction of the health services review commission and the Minister of Health to have all acute care services for the city of Thunder Bay and northwestern Ontario region delivered from the renovated and restructured site of Port Arthur General Hospital and to endorse and approve capital funding to build a new centrally located acute care hospital in the city of Thunder Bay."

This has been signed by yet another 242 constituents in my riding. I've affixed my signature once again in full agreement.

#### STANDING ORDERS REFORM

**Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma):** I have a petition signed by 26 residents mainly from the Toronto and Ottawa areas. The petitioners are petitioning the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to ensure that the public is informed that bills are being debated in the House with enough time that they can ensure they have input and can study the bill. As a result, they are opposed to the changes in the rules this government has brought forward.

I have affixed my name to the petition.

#### CHILD CARE

**Mr Bob Wood (London South):** I have a petition signed by 211 people. It reads as follows:

"We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, draw the attention of the Legislature of Ontario to the following:

"That managing the family home and caring for infant and preschool children is an honourable profession which has not been recognized for its value to our society and deserves respect and support;

"That child care policies and funding should provide equity and fairness to all Ontario families;

"Therefore, your petitioners call upon the Legislature,

"(a) to pursue policy and funding initiatives that will support a full range of child care choices, such as extending the child care tax credit to all families, including those providing full-time parental care; and

"(b) to pursue discussions with the federal government to review the tax system to find ways to assist two-parent families where one parent chooses to remain at home."

#### HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

**Mr John C. Cleary (Cornwall):** I have a petition signed by more people in support of a petition organized by Marjorie Archambault and others concerned about health care and hospital closures. The petition reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas we wish this petition signed in favour of two hospitals to be kept open, and one board for the city of Cornwall."

I have also signed the petition.

#### COURT DECISION

**Mr Bob Wood (London South):** I have a petition which I wish to present. It's signed by 370 people.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the courts have ruled that women have the lawful right to go topless in public; and

"Whereas the Liberal government of Canada has the power to change the Criminal Code to reinstate such public nudity as an offence;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the government of Ontario to pass a bill empowering municipalities to enact bylaws governing dress code and to continue to urge the government of Canada to pass legislation to reinstate such partial nudity as an offence."

#### FERRY SERVICE

**Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands):** This is further to the statement I made earlier in the House. It's signed by the Wolfe Island bridge petition and it's addressed to the Parliament of the province of Ontario. It was presented to me today by Mr Walter Knott of the island, who is very much concerned about the contents of the petition. It states:

"Whereas the restructuring of Frontenac county has isolated Wolfe Island into a small new community with a limited tax base, and such restructuring also barred any assistance with ferry costs by any of the other new communities in Frontenac or the new City of Kingston; and

"Whereas the announcements of mega-week from the Who Does What review have placed full cost of operating the ferry service on Wolfe Island; and

"Whereas it is obvious that the only long-term solution to connectivity to the mainland is a fixed link (bridge); and

"Whereas the studies approved by the Minister of Transportation are clearly focused on obtaining private sector financing to provide the transportation linkage to the mainland, this will undoubtedly place the control of all developments on Wolfe Island in the hands of the suc-

successful bidder in order for them to recoup their investment; and

"Whereas the citizens of Wolfe Island must have control over any development on their island, this being consistent with the democratic process supported by the government of the province of Ontario;

"Therefore we the undersigned citizens of the township of Wolfe Island petition that the government of Ontario guarantee and provide the majority of funding necessary for a fixed link (bridge) to the mainland in order that the future development of Wolfe Island remain under the control of the democratically elected representatives of its citizens; and further

"That such guarantee of majority funding for a bridge be announced before any 'memorandum of understanding' is signed with any successful bidder resulting from the current business plan study."

I have signed the petition as well, as I am in agreement with same.

#### EDUCATION FINANCING

**Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South):** I have literally hundreds of different petitions here. I'll start with this one. It seems the government is having some problems with a whole bunch of issues. This petition deals with the following:

"To the Honourable Lieutenant Governor and the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the following undersigned citizens, beg leave to petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"Whereas the government of Ontario has broken its election promise by slashing millions of dollars from the education budget;

"Whereas by slashing the education budget these cuts are resulting in larger classes, less help for special needs students, loss of junior kindergarten, fewer resources for the classroom and teachers to help students;

"Whereas by amalgamation of school boards into superboards community voice and needs will not be heard or addressed, resulting in a less dynamic and productive education system less reflective of individual community needs;

"Whereas should future cuts continue, these will encourage the downward spiral of the present quality of education."

I've signed by name to that petition.

#### COURT DECISION

**Mr Tony Clement (Brampton South):** I rise today with a petition again on the issue of toplessness, courtesy of Kennedy Road Tabernacle and Bramalea Baptist Church:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario Court of Appeal has ruled that women have the lawful right to go topless in public;

"Whereas the Liberal government of Canada has the power to change the Criminal Code to reinstate such public nudity as an offence;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the government of Ontario to continue to urge the government of Canada to pass legislation to ban going topless in public places."

I am happy once again to affix my name to this petition.

1520

#### TVONTARIO

**Mr Bernard Grandmaître (Ottawa East):** I have a petition signed by a number of Sudburians, addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas TVOntario has served Ontarians of all ages for more than 25 years with quality commercial-free television that continues to focus 70% of its programming schedule on education and children's programming; and

"Whereas TVOntario is available to 97.4% of Ontarians and for some uncabled communities is the only station available, making it a truly provincial asset; and

"Whereas TVOntario continues to work towards increasing self-generated revenues;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to ensure that TVOntario continue to be a publicly owned and funded educational broadcaster."

I have signed the petition.

#### PAY EQUITY

**Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South):** I have another petition having to do with the following:

"To the Honourable Lieutenant Governor and the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the following undersigned citizens, beg leave to petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"Whereas the Ontario government has repealed the employment equity legislation; and

"Whereas this legislation was designed to assist many disadvantaged groups; and

"Whereas in the past" — and again now, and in the future — "voluntary efforts to achieve employment equity have and will not work; and

"Whereas employment equity was working;

"We therefore demand that the government reinstate the employment equity legislation in the province of Ontario to a level playing field for all workers."

I have signed my name to that petition.

#### EDUCATION REFORM

**Mr Tony Ruprecht (Parkdale):** I have a petition regarding the state of education in Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"We believe that the heart of education in our province is the relationship between student and teacher and that this human relation dimension should be maintained and extended in any proposed reform. The Minister of

Education and Training should know how strongly we oppose the secondary reform recommendations being proposed by the ministry and the government.

"We recognize and support the need to review secondary education in Ontario. The proposal for reform as put forward by the ministry is substantially flawed in several key areas: (a) reduced instruction time, (b) reduction of instruction in English, (c) reduction of quality teaching personnel, (d) academic work experience credit not linked to education curriculum, and (e) devaluation of formal education.

"We therefore strongly urge the ministry to delay the implementation of secondary school reform so that all interested stakeholders — parents, students, school councils, trustees and teachers — are able to participate in a more meaningful consultation process which will help ensure that a high quality of publicly funded education is provided."

I have affixed my signature to this document.

#### JUGEMENT DE LA COUR D'APPEL

**Jean-Marc Lalonde (Prescott et Russell) :** J'ai ici une pétition des gens concernés de la région de Hawkesbury. À l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario:

«Attendu que le jugement de la Cour d'appel a été en faveur de la dame qui ne portait pas de haut dans un endroit public ;

«Attendu que la majorité de la population de l'Ontario s'oppose à cette décision ;

«Attendu que cette décision est à l'encontre des valeurs morales et humaines de la majorité des résidents et résidentes de l'Ontario ;

«Nous, les soussignés, adressons à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario la pétition suivante :

«Que le premier ministre de l'Ontario apporte un projet de loi qui interdit la nudité du haut du corps des femmes dans des endroits publics et qui spécifie des lignes de conduite pour les endroits désignés privés.»

J'y ajoute ma signature, merci.

#### CHILD CARE

**Mr Tony Ruprecht (Parkdale):** I have a petition in support of family resource programs, and it's addressed to the Ontario Legislature.

"We, the undersigned, are firmly opposed to the erosion of the child care system. We are most particularly concerned about the unregulated child care sector, which represents the choice of most Ontario families, many living in rural areas.

"We urge this government to make its budget reduction in areas where children and families will not once again be the target of cuts.

"Family resource programs support the informal sector of child care, which includes parents caring for their own children and the care provided by grandparents, home child care providers and nannies."

I am affixing my signature to this document.

#### LABOUR LEGISLATION

**Mr Tony Ruprecht (Parkdale):** I have another petition. The reason I have three petitions today is because there are many people in my riding who are fairly upset with the quick pace of change taking place in Ontario today. The petition is addressed to the assembly of Ontario and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the Minister of Labour has introduced" a new bill "to drastically amend the Labour Relations Act, the Employment Standards Act and other labour legislation which has been brought forward by successive Progressive Conservative" and other "governments in recognition of the legitimate rights of employees of Ontario; and

"Whereas the implementation of" this new bill "undermines the fundamental democratic rights of employees to organize and to have access to collective bargaining; and

"Whereas employers have raised concerns about" this bill because it "will result in an increased number of strikes; and

"Whereas the Minister of Labour is proceeding with" this bill "without consultation with employee groups and without conducting public hearings;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to urge the Minister of Labour to withdraw" all new bills that concern this issue.

I am affixing my signature to this document.

#### STANDING ORDERS REFORM

**Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands):** Although this petition may be somewhat out of date in light of the fact of the rather undemocratic methods that were used by the government to get new standing orders, I will file it with the Parliament in any event. It states:

"Whereas the people of Ontario want rigorous discussion on legislation dealing with public policy issues like health care, education and care for seniors; and

"Whereas many people in Ontario believe that the Mike Harris government is moving too quickly and recklessly, creating havoc with the provision of quality health care and quality education; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government has passed new legislative rules, which have eroded the ability of both the public and the media to closely scrutinize the actions of the Ontario government; and

"Whereas Mike Harris and Ernie Eves, when they were in opposition, defended the rights of the opposition and used the rules to their full advantage when they believed it was necessary to slow down the passage of controversial legislation; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government has now reduced the amount of time that MPPs will have to debate the important issues of the day; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government, through its rule changes, has diminished the role of elected members of the Legislative Assembly who are accountable to the people who elect them, and instead has chosen to concentrate

power in the Premier's office in the hands of people who are not elected officials;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, call upon Mike Harris to withdraw his draconian rule changes and restore rules which promote rigorous debate on contentious issues and hold the government accountable to the people of Ontario."

I'm in full agreement with this petition and have added my signature to it.

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### FINANCIAL SERVICES COMMISSION OF ONTARIO ACT, 1997

#### LOI DE 1997 SUR LA COMMISSION DES SERVICES FINANCIERS DE L'ONTARIO

Mr Grimmett moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 140, An Act to establish the Financial Services Commission of Ontario and to make complementary amendments to other statutes / Projet de loi 140, Loi créant la Commission des services financiers de l'Ontario et apportant des modifications complémentaires à d'autres lois.

**Mr Bill Grimmett (Muskoka-Georgian Bay):** I'm pleased today to kick off the debate on second reading of Bill 140. This is a bill which follows up on a commitment made by the finance minister in the budget in May and it is designed to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the provincial government's regulatory scheme with respect to part of the financial services sector.

Before I deal with some of the details in the bill, I'd like to say, as part of an overview, that the scheme in the bill is to merge the three entities that currently regulate insurance, pensions and some of the smaller financial institutions, some of the other financial institutions that are not perhaps as well known as the banks in Ontario.

The scheme of the bill is also to clarify the role of the government regulator and to establish an independent tribunal to which decisions of that regulator can be taken by members of the financial community.

The present process that exists in Ontario I think is worth reviewing because those people who may be watching, and perhaps some of the people here today, may not be aware of the current regulatory setup in Ontario with respect to insurance, pensions and other financial institutions.

1530

The Ontario Insurance Commission currently licenses and registers people and companies dealing in the insurance industry and its main purpose is to ensure the solvency of provincially incorporated companies and supervise the business and market conduct of insurance companies. It also provides a dispute resolution service. It

maintains the motor vehicle accident claims fund, a very important aspect of auto insurance in Ontario, to protect anyone injured in a motor vehicle accident where insurance is not involved.

It's important, as we review the current setup, to pay attention to my later comments on how the bill will set up a different regime.

The commissioner of insurance occupies a statutory position and performs both adjudicative and regulatory functions. There are some people who feel that the adjudicative and regulatory functions should be moved further apart and the bill addresses that concern.

The insurance commission also conducts hearings, and those hearings are held on issues such as licensing of life agents and orders regarding unfair or deceptive practices. It can take away adjusters' licences and limit conditions on the insurer's licence. Also, it can reduce the term of the licence and can seize the insurer's assets.

Those are some very important regulatory issues that the insurance commission currently deals with. I think it's important for the public to realize that under the new bill all of those functions will be preserved and carried out by the new Financial Services Commission or by the separate Financial Services Tribunal.

The Pension Commission of Ontario currently regulates the administration of pension plans through registration and filing requirements. Of course, its purpose is to protect the rights and pension benefits of members of employer-sponsored pension plans. It also administers the pension benefit guarantee fund, which provides compensation up to specified limits for pension plan members whose plans have a funding deficiency when their employer becomes insolvent.

The commission is a body of five to nine members, which performs regulatory and adjudicative functions. One of its functions is to ensure the solvency of pension plans in Ontario. Again, the pension commission holds hearings as well and those hearings could relate to such issues as payment of surplus money out of a pension plan. It deals with windup and partial windup of a pension plan. As many people would know, those are at times controversial issues. It deals with the registration and rejection of a plan amendment. It also deals with the appeal or review of orders and proposed orders of the superintendent of pensions.

The deposit institutions division of the Ministry of Finance is the third institution that is addressed in the bill. The ministry's deposit institutions division currently regulates the loan and trust industry. It regulates mortgage brokers, credit unions and caisses populaires. It licenses and registers companies, performs field audits, financial analysis, and its duty is to ensure sound business and financial practices are being followed in that field.

There are no adjudicative functions in the deposit institutions division that are comparable to the insurance and pension commissions that I've discussed, although certain decisions of the director of the credit unions and cooperatives branch can be appealed to the superintendent. Certain decisions of the superintendent can be appealed to

the Commercial Registration Appeal Tribunal and the courts.

You can see from the analysis of the existing system that there is considerable variation between those three agencies, if you will. In analysing the setup in those agencies, both the ministry and the industry have commented, when comparing Ontario with other jurisdictions, that there was a need to provide more clarification of the roles of the regulator, to try to distinguish between the role of the provincial regulatory body and a possible appellate body. Also, by looking at other jurisdictions, the Ontario ministry and some of the people who from time to time consult with the ministry identified that in other jurisdictions steps have been taken to integrate those kinds of financial institutions into a more centralized body.

For example, we have Quebec's Inspector General of Financial Institutions, similar to what we have in the proposed bill, British Columbia's Financial Institutions Commission and also the federal government's Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions. In all those cases, and in other jurisdictions in the United States and western Europe, there has been a move to integrate the regulation of financial services. In many cases it mirrors an integration within the industry, because when you look at insurance, pensions and financial institutions, they are in similar activities. In some cases they are now the same companies that operate in all three fields. I think from that standpoint it makes sense to see our regulatory agencies integrated, and that is part of the scheme in the bill.

Obviously one of the purposes of integrating the agencies is to try and find efficiencies. There is good reason for that, not only because our government wants to be as efficient as possible with the public's money but also because currently the regulatory scheme is financed almost entirely by the industry. The industry is well aware that the direction we're headed in and the direction of all western jurisdictions is towards having those institutions that are regulated finance the regulatory service provided by the government. So it is in the interests of the government and of the industry that the regulatory institutions be operated effectively and efficiently so that the costs to the industry of maintaining the regulatory scheme are not so high that they have to be passed on to consumers.

Generally speaking, the idea of pulling together the agencies is one that the industry recognizes is necessary, as does government. There are certainly savings I'll speak about later that are going to be realized from bringing them together.

I wanted to speak about the consultation process that preceded the drafting of this bill. The stakeholders in the community who have an interest in the agencies affected by the bill were notified that the ministry was looking into the prospect of amending the legislation. Most of the bodies that were contacted took the time to either send in written commentary or to meet with officials from the ministry.

I'll just provide the names of some of these organizations which I think are quite widely known and respected: the Association of Credit Unions of Ontario, the Regis-

tered Insurance Brokers of Ontario, the Ontario Mutual Insurance Association — perhaps some of the members here today are members of these great organizations — the Canadian Bar Association, the Canadian Life and Health Insurance Association, the Credit Union Central of Ontario, the Ontario Federation of Labour, the Life Underwriters Association of Ontario, the Pension Commission of Ontario, the Canadian Institute of Actuaries, the Insurance Brokers Association of Ontario. There are many more, but that is an example of the kind of consultation that took place. All of those bodies, and more, were able to meet with ministry officials, provide them with their comments, and to some extent they were influential in the drafting of the legislation.

The legislation itself is designed to establish a new regulatory hierarchy in Ontario for the industry that we're trying to make sure continues to be regulated. The reasons for regulating these aspects of the financial industry are quite obvious. We want to protect the public and make sure the public maintains confidence in Ontario's financial services sector.

#### 1540

The new regulatory hierarchy that's established in the bill is the Financial Services Commission of Ontario. It will be composed of a chair and two vice-chairs. There will be a director of arbitrations and a superintendent of financial services. It's important to understand that there will also be a separate Financial Services Tribunal, which is an independent appeal review body.

The practice whereby the superintendent will have statutory authority and be responsible generally for first-instance regulatory decision-making is important for the industry to know about. I think the industry will grow comfortable with that situation. They will go the superintendent with an idea. For example, a pension plan might go to the superintendent and say: "We have this situation with our pension plan. We would like to do such-and-such with it." The superintendent will be in a position to provide a first-instance notice of proposed decision. The person or party that's going to the superintendent will then decide whether they're going to accept that decision and carry it out or whether they're going to amend their suggestion; or they do have the option under the bill of taking it to the Financial Services Tribunal by way of appeal or review of that proposed decision from the superintendent.

One of the concerns raised by some of the people who were consulted by the ministry was that if the current bodies were merged, there could be the loss of expertise that's been acquired by people who sit either administratively or in a tribunal situation and make decisions. The legislation has been purposely tailored to make sure the experience and expertise of an applicant to sit on this commission would have to be considered by the cabinet and the chair of the Financial Services Commission before they're appointed.

The legislation designs the commission so it will ensure that the agencies will be sufficiently financed to cover their cost of operations. Each regulated sector will pay its share of the ministry costs plus the commission's costs,

plus an equitable portion of the common services and overhead. The assessments will be set by the Lieutenant Governor in Council to cover costs of regulation, and the fees will be set by the commission with the minister's approval. The members of the industry are well aware of this. I'm told by the ministry that they're quite prepared to deal with that, because for all intents and purposes that is the reality under the current scheme.

I'd like to address also the kinds of savings that it is anticipated the merger of the three current regulatory bodies will bring about. To some extent, these are commonsense types of savings. For example, there will now be one administrative boss for this entire regulatory field. That person will be the superintendent, who is the chief executive officer of the commission. He will be in a position to locate inefficiencies, identify where savings can be made and identify especially where the three bodies which currently exist at three different addresses may have an overlap in expertise, may have an overlap in knowledge. They may also be able to share some resources and share some knowledge so they can better perform those regulatory duties that are so important, such as perhaps finding bad operators, identifying areas in the industry that need attention, and there is the obvious opportunity to reduce overhead and to share resources that come from such a merger.

Bill 140 delivers on a commitment, as I said, that was made by the Minister of Finance to create a Financial Services Commission. The commission will protect the public, maintain confidence in Ontario's financial services and create a more efficient and effective financial services regulator by merging the three existing organizations.

By being more cost-effective and efficient, the new commission will enable the financial services industry to better serve consumers and business. This in turn will create a climate for job growth. We've targeted significant savings, particularly because costs are paid by the regulated industries on a cost-recovery basis, and reducing their costs will help keep the sector competitive.

The new commission's structure will provide the flexibility to deal with the increasing trend towards integration of financial services that we see in other parts of the globe. It also lays the groundwork to further streamline regulation and eliminate overlap with the federal government. This will enable us to further reduce costs and, by so doing, keep our financial services sector competitive.

We've consulted extensively with stakeholders to ensure the new integrated structure will provide strong consumer protection and maintain quality service. We've received a broad acceptance of the proposed agency structure.

In response to their emphasis on the importance of an independent appeal process, the new commission's tribunal will provide expert, prompt and effective review of regulatory decisions on pension, insurance and other financial matters.

Ontario is not the first jurisdiction to create an integrated financial services regulator.

Our government is committed to having rules that protect the public and help create a climate for job growth. Bill 140 is just one of several steps we've taken to regulate Ontario's financial services more efficiently and effectively.

Creating the Financial Services Commission is another step towards providing smaller, more efficient and cost-effective government. We're moving towards better regulation of Ontario financial services, improved consumer protection and maximizing the contribution of financial services to Ontario's economic growth.

Those are my comments for now. I'll allow my colleagues to make some comments.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley):** Questions and comments?

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** We are now aware of the government position on the bill and what the bill contains. I should say to the member that I have a concern whether the resources are going to be available to deal with this bill. In other words, the government is passing a number of pieces of legislation these days, and if one were to look at them, one would say they may have some positive aspects to them. However, it is one thing to put down on a piece of paper, that is, in the form of a bill, that which the government desires to happen; it's another to have the necessary resources and staff to carry out that which is contained in the legislation.

I want to say that in so many other areas — I think of the Game and Fish Act, for instance, as just another comparison — what is contained in the government legislation is not offensive, in other words, it is probably supportable by all members of the House, but our concern would be that at the same time the government is bringing in this act, it is not providing for the necessary resources to carry out the responsibilities contained within the provisions of the bill.

We would raise the same concern. We hope that would be overcome. I recognize there's some self-financing that takes place, in other words, the affected individuals will be prepared or at least required to provide some funding, so that may alleviate some of the concern that there will be the necessary resources. But I would ask the member to comment again — I think he mentioned some of that in his initial remarks — on how many staff will be available to carry out the responsibilities and what kind of resources the commission will have to carry out its responsibilities. That would be a concern we might express.

1550

**Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon):** We too, the New Democratic Party, feel positive about the proposal for Bill 140. Nevertheless we'll have to wait until regulatory bodies, regulation comes into being. It seems that this is the way government does things nowadays. They seem to be in a hurry, and, inevitably, you find the devil in the details.

Let me share with you and with the parliamentary assistant, with respect, one example. The credit unions are very much impacted by virtue of this bill. They will be asked to pay an annual fee. Let's keep in mind that the

credit unions are pretty well the only competition that banks have. They don't know how much it will cost. They wish the bill to go to committee because, before they fork over, before they pay the annual fee, which will exceed, surpass \$2 million, they want to know exactly how much so they can adjust, they can plan for the future.

Yet the government makes no mention of what that fee will be. But at 8 or 9 or 10 o'clock of a certain evening in the not-too-distant future regulators under no scrutiny — the opposition won't be there, the credit unions won't be there, the client group — it will be decreed that annually you must pay so much. Before you enter into any agreement, is it not reasonable, is it not sage to ask how much will the freight be? That's something we would do in our private lives, and the situation is no different. We intend to address this by rotation.

**Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Centre):** I'm pleased to rise this afternoon and comment on the member for Muskoka-Georgian Bay's presentation on Bill 140, the Financial Services Commission of Ontario Act. I just want to compliment the member on his fine speech. I think he's a very capable member and a very capable parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance.

When he was speaking today he spoke about the consultation —

*Interjection.*

**Mr Newman:** The member for Kingston and The Islands says, "Tell us what he said." I was listening. What the member for Muskoka-Georgian Bay stated was all the consultation that he has done and the work that the government has done. It's quite indicative of what this government's all about: listening, consulting with people.

He personally met with the Association of Credit Unions of Ontario; he personally met with the Registered Insurance Brokers of Ontario; he also met with the Ontario Mutual Insurance Association, the Canadian Bar Association — I know that would be of interest to the member for Kingston and The Islands; he also met with the Canadian Life and Health Insurance Association, the Credit Union Central of Ontario, the Ontario Federation of Labour.

The member for Muskoka-Georgian Bay went and listened to what they had to say regarding this bill. I think that he ought to be applauded for that. He also met with the Life Underwriters Association of Canada, the Pension Commission of Ontario, the Canadian Institute of Actuaries and the Insurance Brokers Association of Ontario.

That's a lot of consultation on the part of the parliamentary assistant. I think he ought to be complimented for that. I know the ministry itself has met with a lot of people, including the province of British Columbia and the government of Newfoundland and Labrador. Once again, the member for Muskoka-Georgian Bay ought to be commended for his hard work on Bill 140. He's doing a fine job and, again, a very capable member.

**Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands):** Let me say — and I take the member at face value — if he really met with all of these organizations, it'll be a first for this government, because we know that there have

been many bills passed in this House over the last two years where there has been absolutely no consultation, or they've only consulted with their client groups to make sure that what they wanted to hear was being said by the different groups that came.

Of course, listening to groups is one thing; actually doing what the groups so sensibly propose, in a lot of situations, is something else. I cannot understand why the request of the credit union movement to actually make them aware of what the fees were going to be wasn't adhered to. Perhaps the parliamentary assistant can deal with that in his response. Why didn't you deal with their requests, and why didn't you put their requests actually in legislation? It's a very small matter but, as has been pointed out before, surely people and organizations have the right to know what their fees are going to be for using the particular service.

Of course, the other thing that I simply want to point out at this time is, why are we dealing with this bill at this point in time? There are so many other bills that this government feels have to be dealt with immediately in order that the municipal elections and the school board elections can take place for next year. That's why we came back in the middle of August. We came back because this government felt that a certain amount of legislation was still required in order to put the municipal elections properly in line. Of course, when that wasn't moving fast enough we all know what happened. They railroaded a number of rule changes through that in effect will limit the democratic process that takes place in this House on a day-to-day basis.

Why aren't we dealing with the property reassessment bill, the Social Assistance Reform Act and so many of the other acts, rather than this particular act about which there is general agreement?

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you. The member's time has expired. The member for Muskoka-Georgian Bay.

**Mr Grimmett:** I'm happy to respond to the comments from the member for St Catharines, the member for Lake Nipigon, the member for Scarborough Centre and the member for Kingston and The Islands. I'm flattered that they were all able to follow my speech on what some people might consider a dry topic.

With respect to the comments made by the member for St Catharines, I want to assure him that the act itself and the opportunities that the ministry sees coming from the act include very careful planning around resources and staff. All three of the current regulatory bodies have considerable budgetary resources and considerable staff resources, and to a large extent the new commission will simply incorporate all of those resources together. There will be an immediate saving that has been forecast in the range of \$3.8 million but, by and large, the resources and staff of those three bodies will remain intact.

I am advised that the credit unions have in fact been consulted, that they continue to be consulted by the ministry and that they continue to meet with the ministry as part of an industry group to advise the ministry on how to set up the new fee schedule. I'm told that that's not set up yet

but that the credit unions are well aware of where we're going in the future.

Under the current system, some parts of the financial sector pay more than their share, in terms of keeping the regulatory body going, and some pay less. What we're trying to do is find some equity and make sure that everybody pays their share.

Just to correct something that the member for Scarborough Centre said, in fact, it wasn't me who met personally with all the bodies. I met with some of them, but in most cases it was ministry people that they met with, people with considerably more expertise than me.

I'm sorry I don't have time to deal with the concerns of the member for Kingston.

**The Acting Speaker:** Further debate?

**Mr Bradley:** Madam Speaker, I wish to share my time with Mr Phillips from Scarborough-Agincourt and Mr Ramsay from Timiskaming.

I begin by expressing concern that inadvertently — I always put that in there — the member for Scarborough Centre may have been misleading the House, inadvertently. That's what I heard, and he wouldn't do that, because I know him well. He wouldn't do that. Usually it's the opposition that kind of insinuates that, but to hear a government member say that of another government member is truly revolutionary, and the member for Muskoka-Georgian Bay is indeed a revolutionary. I want to say that about him.

First of all, this is an example of a bill that, under the old rules of the House the three House leaders, Mr Wildman, myself and Mr Johnson, would have sat down and said, "Let's allocate not a long period of time to discussion of this bill," because, first of all, I think all three parties will be supporting the bill and I think that's positive. It doesn't always happen that there is a debate that is rancorous over a bill or that there's disagreement. I think we've proved that with our stance on this bill.

But in the old days, which were just a few days ago, before the imposition of new rules, you would have seen an easy agreement on this piece of legislation. It would have passed easily and the government could have gone on with other business. But there isn't an incentive any more for the opposition to cooperate in terms of moving legislation of this kind quickly through the House because correspondingly, the government isn't prepared to give more time on more important bills, at least bills which have more ramifications for the province.

1600

Instead, what we see is that every day at the table they are putting in a new time allocation motion, a motion which restricts debate on legislation. Even though there are new rules that allow the member for Chatham-Kent to speak more — I heard that's what they wanted to do — they still bring in these time allocation motions, these closure motions, these motions restricting debate, and I can't figure out why. I don't know if this is the advice the member for Nepean has given to the Premier or to the House leader or what it is, but that's what happens.

This is a piece of legislation that I believe shouldn't have to take five or six or seven days to debate in this House, because its provisions are generally agreed upon by the three parties and because I don't think it's going to have any kind of drastic detrimental effect on Ontario — the way, for instance, the downloading legislation will have on municipalities across this province, I say, with my good friend the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing smiling and nodding on the other side. I think he is nodding in agreement with me, but he could be simply nodding off at my monotonous voice. I can't really tell.

Anyway, I want to say that I too have a concern about the credit unions. The credit union movement, as my good friend Tom Froese, the member for St Catharines-Brock, would know, has played a very significant role throughout our province, in particular in the Niagara region. Mr Froese was a significant employee of the Niagara Credit Union in a previous incarnation, knows the file well and certainly would agree with me that the credit union movement has played a very significant role in our province.

Certainly the big banks don't need any of these resources. It's difficult for credit unions to compete with the big banks, and one of the reasons they have had some popularity is because of the kind of service they have provided, a different kind of service, to people in the communities in which they are located. I know they must be perturbed that there wasn't more time available to them to find out what the levy would be on those credit unions, because if the levy were of a significant or substantial size, it would have an effect of making them less competitive with the huge banks, which are now making unprecedented profits while they are casting the bodies out into the streets, that is, they are downsizing considerably.

**Mr Douglas B. Ford (Etobicoke-Humber):** Are you against the downsizing?

**Mr Bradley:** Yes, I am, I must say. The member for Etobicoke-Humber asks, am I against the downsizing at the banks? I say yes, I am. I am very much opposed to people losing their jobs unnecessarily because they are insisting that somehow we must all use these machines at the bank. You see the little sign that says, "Do you realize this transaction costs you 10 cents more by going to the teller than it does by using the machine?" I must say I'm delighted to pay 10 cents more, first of all to see a person gainfully employed in our province, and second, to be able to talk to a human being rather than having to deal with a machine.

Some can say that's anachronistic. Some may say that is certainly old-fashioned —

**Mr Pouliot:** Mr Ford won't say it's old-fashioned.

**Mr Bradley:** Mr Ford won't say it's old-fashioned. I know that. I happen to like to deal with people.

One of the reasons the credit union movement has been successful is because to a certain extent it has avoided the kind of massive reductions in employees that the big banks have effected. I become perturbed when I see individual after individual losing his or her job in a bank or the bank going strictly to part-time people sometimes, where the same benefits are not necessarily paid to those individuals

as would be paid to others. I don't think that's progressive. I don't think that's right-sizing; I think that's wrong-sizing.

One has to wonder where the jobs will be if the big banks continue to do that at the same time they are making unprecedented profits. If they were losing a lot of money, one wouldn't like it —

**Hon Cameron Jackson (Minister without Portfolio [Seniors Issues]):** They can't afford to —

**Mr Bradley:** I will get to that. I am pleased with that interjection.

I know people wouldn't like it if they were downsizing under any circumstances, but if they were losing money, people would say, "At least I understand they are trying to cut their costs." But they are already making unprecedented profits and they are casting their employees out into the street in large numbers.

The member for Burlington South, who conducted an exhaustive review of workers' compensation in this province, went from community to community, and in a report he provided, recommended that the Workers' Compensation Act apply to the banks. Obviously, he was well aware the banks could afford this, that there are employees in certain circumstances who might have to avail themselves of the services of the Workers' Compensation Board. I am bewildered at the fact that the government did not implement that very progressive, and I must say enlightened, suggestion and recommendation from the member for Burlington South, who was responsible for the Workers' Compensation Board consultation at that time. I know he will continue to try to prevail upon the Minister of Labour and the Premier to have that provided for in the act, because the banks can certainly afford that.

I speak on behalf of those credit unions in the province that are perturbed that they don't know what the assessment will be and the potential impact of that assessment on them.

I would have thought that perhaps we would have dealt with this bill this evening and that this afternoon we would have been dealing with a bill in the House on gas prices. This afternoon I revealed to members of the House that it is within provincial jurisdiction. We all remember when Bill Davis stood in this very Legislature on that side of the House, on July 3, 1975, and announced the following:

"Today my government proposes to introduce an act to be known as the Gasoline and Fuel Oil price Freeze Act, 1975. The bill imposes a temporary freeze on refined petroleum products sold in Ontario."

Perhaps he was contemplating a commission of this kind that would be dealing with gas prices. It says:

"The freeze will be for 90 days beginning midnight tonight, subject to limited extension by the Lieutenant Governor in Council if the assembly is recessed or not in session."

He went on to say, and I admire Premier Davis for this — he didn't shy away from it: "I have met with the principals of petroleum companies that merchandise petroleum products in Ontario. They have explained their problems. I am not unaware of the legitimacy of some of their con-

cerns, but the wholly legitimate interests of the consuming public must be served. It must be clearly established that all charges made by the oil companies not arising directly from the cost of crude oil itself are justified."

That's Premier Davis, and he brought this bill in. I would have thought that this afternoon, rather than dealing with this legislation, we would have been dealing with a bill of this kind that Bill Davis thought was suitable for Ontario. He took direct action. He didn't huff and puff. He didn't point fingers somewhere else. He said, "I've got the responsibility right here in Ontario, and whatever responsibility I have constitutionally, I'm going to take action on it." I admire Bill Davis for doing that, and I hope he's watching this afternoon as we are debating in this House this very legislation, as I offer him the compliment that he so richly deserves.

Had I been in the House at the time — I was not; my friend Floyd Laughren from Nickel Belt was — I would have complimented him on implementing this kind of legislation. He didn't shy away, he didn't go out into a media scrum and huff and puff and say how awful it was after his Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism said the government would certainly never be intervening and would be a laughingstock if they did; and then of course a week later, the Premier wants somebody else to intervene.

I would have thought we maybe would have been dealing with that this afternoon, but we aren't. I know Mr Ford would have been happy to deal with that legislation this afternoon because he's very interested in the matters that are before the House and I am sure concerned about them.

I thought — you would appreciate this probably as much as anybody, Mr Speaker — we might even be dealing with an issue of hospital closings, because they've threatened so many hospitals in your community and my community. We feel uneasy about the potential for closings.

1610

I would have thought there would be a bill perhaps this afternoon that would say: "No more closing of hospitals. We're finally going to live up to Mike Harris's promise," when he said, during the leaders' debate in May 1995, "Certainly, Robert" — he's referring to Robert Fisher — "I can guarantee you it is not my plan to close hospitals." I thought this afternoon we might be dealing with legislation of that nature, but we're not.

Speaking of commissions — and this Financial Services Commission is a good one; I think it has the potential to provide a good service for us — I would have thought, however, that we would be perhaps dealing with an issue of the Liquor Control Board of Ontario this afternoon, where we were going to confirm the continued existence of the LCBO. As my friends from the Niagara region know, one of the best purveyors of the product produced in the Niagara Peninsula, something that allows us an equal access out there, is the Liquor Control Board of Ontario stores. That allows our product, which for years was shunned unjustifiably, to now enjoy the advantage of

being on display prominently in our Liquor Control Board stores.

I hope the government has abandoned any of its ridiculous plans to privatize and give to its political friends the right to dispense alcohol in this province when in fact the LCBO has changed with the times and has modified its mode of operations. It is a very progressive organization under the capable leadership of Andy Brandt, former member for Sarnia, former leader of the Progressive Conservative Party when it was a progressive, conservative party and a person who is knowledgeable in the field of wine and of the other products which are sold in the stores of our province. He knows that the LCBO — just as we hope, because I want to tie this into this bill all the time, this commission will ensure quality control — ensures quality control of the products.

**Mr Ford:** Do you think VLTs should be in there?

**Mr Bradley:** The member asks, "Should VLTs be in there?" I would say, probably a good idea. This morning in committee we had the Honourable Robert Welch, QC, former Deputy Premier of the province, a minister of many different portfolios, the MPP for St Catharines-Brock for 22 years — I think previously it was called Lincoln when he was first elected — a very much respected individual who was appointed to the body which supervises the implementation of video lottery terminals in Ontario.

The reason I was happy to see Bob there is that I think he's a cautious individual when it comes to the spread of this disease called video lottery terminals or electronic slot machines. I am hopeful he will prevail upon the government to not just move slowly, but to avoid moving into every bar and every restaurant on every street in every neighbourhood in every town, village and city in Ontario with these video lottery terminals which prey upon the most vulnerable and desperate people in our society.

I thought that was a good appointment. Our party supported it and I'm sure the NDP supported it. I am confident Mr Welch will do a good job. By the way, I should say in my remarks again that as a member of the Davis administration one of Mr Welch's many pluses, one very important plus, was his ability to build consensus. He wasn't dogmatic, he wasn't ideological; he was a man of principle in this House, but not ideologically way over to the extreme right.

So he was able to deal. He was in favour, for instance, of the purchase of Suncor so that the government of Bill Davis had a window on the oil industry. He was in favour of the act which I made reference to, an act to provide for an interim freeze in the price of certain petroleum products. He was a progressive individual and maybe he should be considered for this commission because of his progressive views. As I say, he was there back when it was the Progressive Conservative Party and not the Reform Party in power.

I wanted to deal with some specifics in the legislation and I promised to share the time with my friend from Timiskaming, who has some observations to make, and the member for Scarborough-Agincourt, who is highly re-

spected for his knowledge in the field of finance and economics.

I want to deal with a couple of the items that I have jotted down as being of some significance. I want to reiterate that we agree in principle with the idea to reduce some of the duplication which has resulted. This is the kind of thing I think there is a consensus on, this kind of duplication. The opposition doesn't always say that what the government is doing is wrong or doesn't always say that the specific direction the government is moving is incorrect. There are going to be instances where there is a consensus, and this is one of them. The government is doing what any one of the parties would be doing in this regard. It's essential to effect those kinds of economies.

It mentions that the bill establishes the Financial Services Commission in place of the Pension Commission of Ontario, the Ontario Insurance Commission, the deposit institutions division of the Ministry of Finance, and also it creates a Financial Services Tribunal which will hear appeals of review decisions made by the superintendent of financial services, who is essentially responsible for the operation of the commission and supervising the regulated sectors.

I have heard many people say, "Let's deregulate." There are some members of the House who are obsessed with deregulation, who believe that all government intervention is evil and is wrong. I think the people who devised this particular piece of legislation recognized that there is a time for regulation, that there is a time for government intervention, that there is a need for supervision so that not only the richest and most powerful are able to implement their agenda on the province, but they may have to do so under the restraint of an independent government.

There were concerns in the industry because, as my colleague noted in the two-minute responses, many groups are under the impression that this government is going to wait to consult with them, making changes before proceeding, not moving very rapidly ahead without input. Well, there is some consultation. The two members on the government side were arguing over how much and whom they consulted with, but there was some consultation. It wasn't as extensive as we would like.

Once again, it's an example of doing it quickly rather than doing it correctly. We in the opposition are not here to sandbag you, we're not here to bring you down at this point in time; we simply want to help you to do things better. You probably had a different impression. I don't know where you would get that, but you probably had a different impression. We simply want to help you along in terms of your ability to bring in legislation which will work. That's why some of the non-cabinet members have been whispering out there, although I see Margaret Marland is now going to put a rein on those people. She says they shouldn't be speaking outside of caucus. But some of them have said: "We're moving too quickly. We've moving too drastically. We're not looking at the ramifications of the actions." That's what some of the members have been saying.

**Mr Tom Froese (St Catharines-Brock):** Who said that? Name names.

**Mr Bradley:** I don't want to embarrass them in this House because I've listened in the past to what my friend Morley Kells, an independent-minded person, has written in the *Toronto Star*. I've listened to my good friend Mr Skarica from Wentworth North who has in very colourful terms labelled this government; I won't get into the details of that. Mr Carr, a long-respected member from the city of Oakville, has certainly expressed his concerns that the power seems to be concentrated in the hands of a few people in the Premier's office. Bill Murdoch has certainly expressed some concerns on television and radio and in newsprint. Even my good friend from Wellington many months ago expressed his concern that the government was unwise to be proceeding with an income tax break before the budget was balanced.

I hate to see them restrained. I read that in the paper, in the *Toronto Sun*. A story by Jeff Harder said, "Margaret Marland, the chair of the caucus, is now saying members shouldn't say anything outside." Yet I know that when each one of the members was elected they were under the impression, because Mike Harris was talking like a Reformer, that the members would be able to say anything and vote any way they wanted and do anything they wanted to. Then in power it's exactly the opposite.

1620

Some of them have shown some dissent and I admire those who are prepared to speak out. They may not be on the way up. They may not be close to the Premier in terms of affection the Premier may have for them politically. But I'm going to tell you, they are admired by their constituents when they do that. I know they must have a few concerns about this legislation, or at least that you're moving more quickly than you should, without consulting with everybody who should be consulted with.

The Financial Services Commission recovers the cost of regulating the sectors from companies within the sectors. In other words, the commission will be self-financing. For credit unions, this means a substantial new user fee being imposed upon them with no formula for assessment yet. This is another tax. I know you people don't like counting this as a tax but it's a tax, because a user fee is a tax.

You used to talk about how many taxes the NDP or Liberals brought in. I was counting one day and I counted 167 new taxes implemented by this government, 167 new taxes. You know why? Because I counted those user fees. Mike Harris said a user fee is a tax. I remember he said that, so I've counted 167. I think if I went through everything, I'd count 200 or 300 or 400 more new tax increases by this government, forcing the local level of government to also implement such tax increases.

There are concerns whether the tribunal is the appropriate place for major decisions such as pension windups that may be best handled by the courts. Pension windups are a real problem. Many people have brought them to my attention. They seem to take forever and often people believe that the final result is unfair.

Lastly, I want to just touch on — it mentions the Insurance Act. I've had a member from St Catharines city council who has brought to my attention her concern about the fact that there is not a provision for insurance companies to continue to insure people simply because they've had claims as they relate to water. You passed an act in this Legislature, the government did, under the auspices of the Minister of Municipal Affairs, I believe, which restricted the ability of people to say that the municipality was responsible when there was a sewer backup. Many of these people are faced with this constantly and they are now told by the insurance company, "We're not going to cover you any more." Then they hear the provincial government has passed legislation saying, "You can't go after the municipality for this." Those people are left in a very vulnerable position.

I hope that the corporate captains of the insurance companies will look at their consciences and perhaps make a change in this and allow for assisting people.

**Mr Ford:** They just look at the bottom line, Jim. There is no room for conscience.

**Mr Bradley:** The member for Etobicoke-Humber says they look only at the bottom line. Did you say they had no consciences as well?

**Mr Ford:** They look at it this way, Jim; they look at the bottom line. It's strictly business, and if they don't make a profit, there is no insurance.

**Mr Bradley:** I hope Hansard got that because I wanted that on Hansard. I will share that with the member of St Catharines city council —

**Mr Ford:** I understand that. Not your socialist position.

**Mr Bradley:** — and she is not a socialist, I assure you — who would like to know what government members think about that. I will be happy to share that intervention. I only hope that Hansard was able to get the whole statement in there.

I don't want to take up too much time now because I have on record what I want on record. I don't want to take up too much time in this House because I promised to share some with my colleague from Timiskaming and my colleague from Scarborough-Agincourt. I will now pass the torch to the very capable member for Timiskaming.

**Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming):** As difficult as it is for the member for St Catharines to pass on the opportunity to speak because he is one of the most enthusiastic debaters in this House, I very much appreciate the opportunity to contribute to this debate.

When I look at the bill that is being debated here, I agree with the member for St Catharines that I could probably think of 30 other areas that we should be debating and moving on in this House to protect working people and families in Ontario. In fact, I see I have a very attentive listener here.

I would like to say that I wasn't here yesterday because I was back in my riding and I was attending a meeting of 30 displaced older workers from a mine that had gone down in Virginiatown, a municipality that is due east of Kirkland Lake and sits right on the Quebec border. That

mine, originally called the Kerr mine, was run by the Kerr-Addison Mining Co years ago. They had a pretty good run at it and they got over 50 million ounces of gold there from that town, but you wouldn't believe that if you looked at the town today because none of that gold ever stayed in that town. It's had a different group of owners over the last 10 years and twice in the last seven years has gone bankrupt.

There is a provincial-federal program, the program for older worker adjustment, that kicked in when it first went bankrupt in the early 1990s. Some of those workers are on a pension now. These are workers who are in their late 50s and early 60s who have worked in very tough conditions, doing very hard labour for 30 to 35 years. These men aren't in the best of shape and many of them never had the very best of education. They started right from, in some cases, elementary school, not even going to high school, or maybe they got grade 9 or grade 10 and went to the mine, because in those days you could make a very, very good living and raise a family, as they all did in that town.

The program has changed since it was developed in the early 1990s to take care of all these bankruptcies that were coming forward from the recession of the early 1990s of this decade. Now we have a program that has been redesigned, both by the provincial government and the federal government, and it's not nearly as rich as it was before. Now we're going to have recipients of the same program living in the same town, in fact living on the same streets and being neighbours to each other, and one is receiving cheques for \$900 a month and others will probably be lucky to get \$300 to \$400 a month under the same program. That really doesn't seem fair to me.

What I think this really begs, and I wish the government would look again at their adjustment programs — in fact they've brought in a bill that has changed the wage protection act that was brought in by the previous government —

**Mr Bradley:** Abandoned the workers.

**Mr Ramsay:** They abandoned the workers, for sure. It's sad in a situation — because we're talking here about financial commissions — where there is a bankruptcy, whether it was the bank that pulled the plug or, in this case, the township was involved because of the arrears of taxes, that who in the end usually suffers in any of these actions is the worker. It's the person who is doing the very hard work that generated the wealth in the company, in this case down underground in the mine. They're the ones who suffer.

Some people watching might ask why it would it be necessary to have such a program in place. Partly the answer is because of the reason I stated. You have, in many cases, a workforce that only knows that particular skill. Their labour skills are not any longer mobile. Some are not literate, some may be undereducated, and also they've worked so hard that some of them are in pretty tough shape and it would be very difficult for them to go back underground and, say, work until they are 65.

One of the real problems and why this program is needed is that because there is no wage protection for these workers. These workers are owed today thousands and thousands of dollars, some of them over \$20,000, from the previous employer. Because the employer went to the employees and said: "I'm trying to keep this company going. If you just bear with me and forgo your paycheques for a few weeks, your bonuses for a few weeks, I think I can try to keep this thing going." I'm sure the owner was doing this in good faith. I'm sure the owner was trying to keep the mill going because the owner understood the importance of the operation to the town and to the families and the workers he was responsible for. In the end, because of all sorts of circumstances that conspired against this operation, the owner was not able to keep it going.

1630

I'm not here to point blame today, to point an accusing finger at anybody about this. The point I want to make is, who suffers? And when you can't determine who's to blame, you can't get some redress from the party who caused all this trouble so that you can legitimately pay the workers what is their due, the wages they earned, then there's got to be some sort of protection system in place.

The previous government brought in a wage protection act that at least guaranteed up to \$5,000 of wages owed in the case of a bankruptcy. As I said, in this case, it's not even clear whether this business technically went bankrupt or not, but it's no longer functioning and the workers are no longer working.

This government has decided to remove that provision from our labour law in Ontario, so there will be no wage protection act at all to cover workers from now on when bankruptcies occur in Ontario. Quite frankly, I don't understand why all of us should not have that obligation to ensure that if our laws are not good enough to ensure that in cases of insolvency and bankruptcy workers are guaranteed through some sort of private sector mechanism, therefore the government does not step in and ensure that at least workers get what is their due. That's not only wages earned and vacation pay, but also should be their severance, so they are equipped either to get the retraining they need to move to another community, if that's what's necessary, or at least to be able to survive with their family until they can find suitable employment.

This POWA, which is the acronym for program for older worker adjustment, is there because and has criteria that only kick in when a major employer in a community represents a vast proportion of the jobs in that community and therefore it's not only the families and individuals who are affected but the whole community is profoundly affected.

In southern Ontario I think we'd be very hard-pressed to point at a community that was solely dependent upon one business or industry. There are certainly big companies that give tremendous support to many of our communities in the south. If you look at our major automotive assembly communities in southern Ontario, we obviously have to say that Ford, GM and Chrysler provide a major underpinning for those communities across the province

that are fortunate enough to have such a company within their borders. But in northern Ontario you can have communities where basically the mine or the mill is the sole employer, providing maybe up to 80% to 90% of the work in that community. When that happens, that's why a program such as POWA kicks in, to not only make adjustments for that family and those workers but also for the community.

The other criterion is that of course it's targeted for older workers and only workers in their 50s and older are targeted by this program, to help them with that adjustment. Because the truth is that if you're lucky enough to have another mine or a mill within commuting distance of their home or that area, that region they live in, it doesn't appear from the evidence I have that many mines or mills are interested in hiring workers in their late 50s who have had 25 to 30 years of hard work in a mine or a mill. They're leery of that. They're looking for younger people.

I know we're not supposed to discriminate in hiring practices in Ontario and this country, but the reality is — because this is what the workers tell me — it's very, very difficult for them to be rehired. That's why there is such a program there, and I would say to the government that while it's looking at setting up a financial commission to regulate the financial institutions that come under Ontario regulation, it's also very important to start to look at working men and women in this province who are really suffering today.

You only have to sit down at a meeting of 30 older workers who have been displaced in such a situation to really realize how bad a situation in Ontario can be for people like this. You drive around much of this province and, quite frankly, Ontario is a pretty affluent place. The economy is picking up somewhat. There is some more employment coming forward, though we'd like to see certainly more employment for our youth. That's still a big challenge before us.

The Canadian economy has been growing at a steady rate, not maybe as quickly as some would like and certainly not translating into the employment figures that all of us would like. But there are vast pockets of this province that still have not shared in the tremendous gift of the diversification of the Ontario economy, because we never got the post-war industrial revolution that happened in southern Ontario when up the 401 corridor the automobile parts and assembly plants came in. The steel mills all expanded in the south. We never really got a piece of that because heavy industry such as automobiles and steel have to stay close to their markets. So those industries stayed in the south where the markets were and also because of the auto pact agreement back in the early 1960s. They had to be where the markets were for export into the United States. All that industry stayed primarily south of Barrie and remains so to this day.

In the north we never shared the fruits of that post-industrial revolution, so we have a very different economy there. I say to the government members that, when they are considering government policy for labour adjustment and labour law, they really have to have an eye for the

whole province and that the province is a very diverse place. The type of work we do in the various regions of this province is different from the different regions within Ontario, and you must have flexibility when you're drafting legislation in order to appreciate what people are going through.

One of the other aspects of this adjustment system that most of the people who applied for I believe are going to be qualified for — and they should find out by the end of the month or early October — is that while this program will take a few months to kick in, there's no paycheque coming in to those families. Unemployment in that part of northeastern Ontario could be as high as 25%. It's very high. Statistics Canada and Human Resources Development Canada don't have a breakdown for an area other than just for northeastern Ontario, but for that particular area, for a lot of Timiskaming, the unemployment rate is extremely high. So it's very difficult for those workers to get other work.

As you know, the gold price is depressed. American Barrick announced that mines out of this country are closing, but other mines have their problems, whether it's with price of production or like the Kinross mine in Kirkland Lake, which has some severe challenges for occupational health and safety and is trying desperately to re-engineer that operation to keep it running. There have been some massive layoffs in the town of Kirkland Lake in gold mining also.

The workers in my region of northern Timiskaming are very hard-pressed to get work. The work is not there and the whole economy is depressed. What are these workers to do in the interim while they wait for, hopefully, this POWA program to kick in and get some sort of financial relief through that? The only avenue left of course is social assistance, now sort of tarted up as Ontario Works. The criteria for Ontario Works now have been toughened up. I know most of the government members over there, maybe all of them, really agree with how they've toughened this up. They're out there to eradicate fraud in the system, and I'm sure there has been that and we would all agree in this House, in all parties, that we've got to eradicate fraud.

**1640**

But I'd like to make a case on behalf of these workers today, and that is that you don't treat these workers who have worked 25 to 35 years doing some very hard work in the mines the very same way you would maybe a 23-year-old employable male coming on to the system, for whatever reason. The reason I say that is this. Many of these workers, while they wait for this POWA cheque to come in, will be forced to go on social assistance, but in order to qualify for social assistance, they are going to have to deplete their assets down to about \$5,000; that's their disposable assets. With the tougher rules, if because perhaps they had a large family they happen to have a house that maybe now is valued at \$90,000, which I would think today in Ontario is a pretty modest price, they could be in a position where they may have to sell that house and get into a cheaper residence to qualify for social assistance.

Quite frankly, I think that's wrong. I think it is a shame in Ontario for us to be treating people who have worked hard all their lives, who find themselves now in the latter part of their working lives displaced through no fault of their own, because of a bankruptcy of a company, who have lived for 30 to 40 years in a region of Ontario that they've become familiar with, that they call home — that that is really no longer financially viable for them, no longer supplies the work for them to take care of themselves and their families.

For us to treat them as we would somebody we want to give incentive to to get some life training skills or who has had trouble getting into or hasn't wanted to get into the workforce is wrong. We've got to look at the different type of person that comes to the system for help.

That's why you can't categorize in general all the people who finally come to social assistance. They are not all the same, and we shouldn't be treating anyone who comes to social assistance as a criminal. We should be giving them all the benefit of the doubt and working with them to basically decide why they are there and what their needs are.

In the case of older workers such as I have described — who are not just in my particular area from that Kerr mine in Virginiatown; this happens all over the north, especially in resource-dependent communities — we need to take a look at changing our system and adjusting it to fit some of these situations. This would go a long way, as I've mentioned before, as well as with adjusting our labour law and labour adjustment programs, in capturing people who seem to be falling through the cracks and coming on to social assistance, probably a place that is inappropriate for them, a place they shouldn't be in the first place.

Somehow we should recognize the contribution that — in this case in the mines, it was mostly men in those days that found themselves in that situation. Those men have toiled for all those years, have raised their families, have been outstanding and upstanding citizens in their communities for all these years. We should not throw them on a trash heap but give them some dignity and respect for what they've accomplished in their lives and give them some support, better support than we are today, until they can derive their pensions. That's what we're looking for, a better bridging mechanism such as this program for older worker adjustment. We should be putting the money into it so it is there when workers require this.

In a perfect economy, I suppose we wouldn't need a program like this. We wouldn't have bankruptcies; we wouldn't have working men and women who are thrown out because a company is no longer viable and cannot meet its payroll obligations. We wouldn't have that situation in a perfect Ontario, but we do, and we have to face that reality. That's why there's still a place for government to play a role in this sort of situation. In a perfect world you wouldn't need government. There would be no need for protection of persons and property in a perfect world. There'd be no need for this financial protection for people.

But because it isn't a perfect world, we've decided to come together and form governments. We periodically, every four to five years, go to the people. They elect the people they want to represent them to design the policies they want. Many of the members across the way, I know, would like to see probably half the government we have today, but I will tell you that there's always going to be a need for government. There is always going to be some basic requirements that government come together. And who are we? We're the people. We come together to protect ourselves, to protect each other, to protect our citizenry. It is what we owe each other in doing this.

Sometimes, though, in our zeal — as you are in your restructuring zeal to get all the various institutions right; today we're talking about the financial institutions — we somehow forget some of the real people who are out there, who are having real problems because it isn't a perfect world. We must never abandon those people.

In our zeal to restructure and look at all the institutions — taking on the boards of education, putting the pressure on the municipalities to get more efficiencies out of them, as if they haven't been cutting in the last few years, trying to be more and more efficient; heaven knows, the municipal officials don't want to raise taxes, and many of them haven't over the years because they have been efficient — with our zeal to change all these systems all at once, I say to you we are forgetting some people.

We're forgetting some of the people who make this wonderful Ontario possible, the people who toil every day for a living and, in the cases that I'm talking about, toil very hard physically for a living in very dangerous circumstances to make their family possible, to make their community possible, to make their region and their province possible. They generate tremendous wealth for not only the province, through the taxes they pay, but for all the shareholders who have a part of the ownership of these particular operations. It is extremely important that we not forget these people when we look at these programs.

I would say to the members that when you look at social assistance, when you look at a worker adjustment program, things are not necessarily as simple as they appear. Sometimes it's very attractive to reach out and grab the very first simplistic solution that appears, sometimes because, with our blinders on, that's just the way we'd like to try to fix it. Sometimes a very simplistic solution is what we think is maybe the most attractive to the voter, so we put that out to the voter: "If there's a problem, here's the solution." I suppose all politicians are guilty of that.

I think most of us would agree that this government used issues such as that, with very simple solutions, to attract voters, whether it be a tax cut or the boot camp or the big welfare cuts. I say to you, stop relying on the simplistic solutions. Take the time to really look at a situation and to really look at the problems that are there for all the various people in this province. All the problems aren't just involved with all the government agencies and all the government structures. The problems are far

bigger than that. They're bigger because they affect real people and their families.

It's important, and I think that's why the people, in the polling across this province, are telling you to take your time when you look at this, not only because we all want you to get all the restructuring right that you're trying to bite off — quite frankly, I think you're biting far too much off than you can chew. You're doing that far too fast and far too deep, and the vast majority of Ontarians are telling you that. Not only are you making mistakes in the institutions you're grappling with to restructure, but you're ignoring other institutions and other people and families that are not getting the attention that is their due. That's just one example of that.

When I've been speaking to municipal leaders in the Timiskaming area, one township reeve put it very succinctly. I'm glad the Minister of Municipal Affairs is in the House today to hear this. He said to me that he understood and believed in the restructuring, but he really thought you were constructing or reconstructing a building without a blueprint, that in your zeal to work on this — we all agree we need to work on this; there's no problem there — by going so quickly, we maybe don't know exactly what the building's going to look like at the end of the road. That's an impression from one municipal reeve.

1650

I share that, because we're not quite sure what our municipalities are going to look like in the end. In many cases in my particular area we are not seeing a very heavy participation so far in the nominations for municipal elections. In fact, in Kirkland Lake we have three people vying for mayor, because the present mayor is not planning to run, but right now it looks like maybe only one of the incumbent councillors is planning to run out of the five positions that will be open under the newly reconfigured council.

I think a lot of this is the apprehension being caused in people who take a genuine interest in their communities, who would really like to contribute to public service at the local level. I can think of no better level to do that at, a level that's so close to the people and so vital, a level where more people can take advantage of that. When you run for office at the federal or provincial level, you basically have to give up your work, and in many cases you have to leave your community, as we all do, to come in this case to Toronto, which for me is far away from home.

At the municipal level, people who live in the community can stay in the community, can stay in their jobs and really contribute their energy and their ideas and their intellect to municipal government. But right now what I'm finding is that many of those people, who could potentially be a tremendous resource for municipal government, are hesitant about doing that. Part of the reason, as I just explained to the minister, is that they really are not sure about what they're going to be in control of and what the resources are going to be to handle the various problems out there.

On Saturday night at one of the functions, I was able to have dinner with one of the municipal councillors from

Kirkland Lake. We were talking about the transfer of non-profit housing to the town of Kirkland Lake. I was bringing up the concern, a caution to this councillor, that, "You really have to watch the condition of all the different apartment buildings you're going to inherit," because we know there are millions and millions of dollars worth of repairs that are outstanding, that have not been done.

Basically, there's a big repair bill down the road that's attached to this gift, this present that the Harris government is giving to all our communities. While there may be some adequate resources from the federal government and the provincial government to maintain the daily operating costs and to service the mortgages owing on these buildings, for sure we know that the disrepair of much of the housing stock in the whole Ontario Housing Corp throughout this province is going to be a large potential unfunded liability that the property taxpayer down the road is going to have to pay.

I understand that now that most of the figures have come out on the municipal downloading from the Harris government to our municipalities, some of the municipal clerk-treasurers in our townships are getting some very close figures as to what the tax increases are going to be. With the non-profit housing, with the ambulance, with the police, which is a horrendous per-household charge that basically becomes a new property tax for many municipalities, taxes are going to go up at a horrendous rate in many municipalities.

I don't know how many of those small municipalities are going to compete — and that's what it's going to be: a competition — for this new restructuring fund that the government has put in place of the unconditional grant formula that used to be there. At least with the unconditional grant formula there was a pot of money there, but there wasn't a competition to grab at it; there was a rational formula based on what they used to call the equalized assessment that compared the ability of each municipality to raise money through taxation. When you had low property values, for instance, in a particular region, that it didn't have a very high commercial or industrial assessment as you would in many parts of this province, you got a larger share of the provincial grant.

That program is no longer going to be there, but for one or two years there will be a similar pot of money. But now it's going to be a cap-in-hand begging operation, with municipalities fighting over municipalities to try to make a case that "We're under greater hardship than our neighbour township because of these various reasons, because our taxes are now going up 130% or 200% or 300%," or whatever the case may be in some of these municipalities.

The government members are going to have to be aware of this. They're going to start to see next year that while they've been given reassurances by the Premier and the Treasurer that local property taxes are not going to go up, there are going to be certain small rural townships that are no longer able to tax the full amount on farm land, that are going to have to spread that 75% loss of the value of the farm land assessment across all taxpayers now in that municipality to make up for that loss because the farmer

doesn't get the farm tax rebate any longer. That and the police are going to cause a tremendous tax increase.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Ramsay:** I only hope, to answer the member across the way, that in terms of the fund that's there, those smaller townships that have the greater hardship are able to make the case that they can derive a greater share of that fund than probably they ever had to before under the support grant system, to make up for those deficiencies.

Those are the questions that still aren't answered, because unlike the old formula — you understood what you were to receive from the grant. There is no formula right now that says, "Township X, town X or county X, you will receive this much money from the fund." That's not there.

I would say to the government members that maybe you should ensure that some sort of formula is in place so that the municipalities have that anxiety healed over. What you're going to have in the municipal elections coming up this fall, probably starting officially in a few more weeks, is that a lot of the municipal officials who used to be on board with the governing party are finding themselves having to run against the governing party in order to get themselves elected or re-elected.

I'd like to thank you, Mr Speaker, for the opportunity I've had to speak today. I'm sorry I didn't have the opportunity to share the time further with my colleagues, but I appreciate the chance.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson):** Comments and questions?

**Mr Len Wood (Cochrane North):** The member for St Catharines and the member for Timiskaming covered a lot of territory talking about Bill 140. I share the same concerns they do, that although we're having a lengthy debate on Bill 140, it is not nearly as important as the high prices of gasoline. Bill Davis, back in 1975, when he knew he was dropping in popularity and had to go into an election, brought in a bill that would regulate and freeze the price of gasoline for 90 days throughout this province. We haven't seen any action coming from this particular government.

The member for Timiskaming, when he talked about the combining of the financial services, was very concerned about a mine in his area now that the Conservative government has eliminated the wage protection act. You're putting older workers at risk out there and they're not going to have enough money for survival and to care for their families. It's a direct result of action that was taken by this government.

**Health care:** They're talking about the closing of hospitals right across the province. When you're talking about 25 to 30 hospitals that are going to be closed in the next year and a half, where is the health care going to be? Who's going to look after health care?

**Education:** At the same time as they're saying they don't have enough money to go around, the government is going to go out and waste \$1 million on a program to bash teachers across this province and try to get them to give in

to lowering their wages and increasing the size of the classroom.

There are so many bills that could have been brought forward. We could have had a more productive afternoon debating some of the bills that will have to be debated and passed into third reading before the municipal elections can proceed in November. This is not happening. We're dealing with a bill here that is not important to those issues that the people out there want to hear about.

1700

**The Acting Speaker:** Comments and questions?

**Mr Grimmett:** I wanted to touch on the comments made by the member for St Catharines. The member for Timiskaming had an interesting speech today, but I don't think it really dealt with Bill 140, so I'll restrict my comments to those made by the member for St Catharines.

The member occasionally spoke to Bill 140, and the concerns that were raised really were around the issue of credit unions. I just wanted to make it very clear that the Ministry of Finance and other people in our government have been consulting with credit unions. The credit unions, in all of their member associations — and there are several associations that represent credit unions from the province of Ontario — have had the opportunity to meet with Ministry of Finance officials. They were given early notice of the concepts that were going to be in this bill.

The concept of a regulatory scheme, where the financial institutions that are being regulated would pay for that regulatory scheme, is one that is widespread in western countries. It's one that the credit unions were well aware of. They were told, "We intend to set up a scheme under the Financial Services Commission whereby those bodies that are being regulated will pay the cost of regulation for their sector." It was recognized that under the current scheme, for example in the pension commission, pension plans contribute a little more than the cost of the regulatory scheme for their sector, and the credit unions contribute a little less than the cost of the regulatory sector for them. So they're aware that there are going to be some costs under the new scheme, but they're being consulted and they have an opportunity to help design the new fees.

**Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt):** I want to compliment the members for St Catharines and Timiskaming who spoke on the bill and to say I appreciate the points they made about our party being very supportive of things that we can do to improve the efficiency of our financial community in Ontario; that we are very supportive of bills that move to update and modernize our financial institutions. So we very much look forward to this new commission.

I appreciate what the member for St Catharines did to point out that we're dealing with perhaps the most sensitive issues here: Ontario's pensions, Ontario's insurance plans and Ontario's savings in our trust and our credit unions. While we appreciate this commission going forward, I think the member for St Catharines quite correctly cautioned that if the government does here what they did to so many other things: the family support plan, the boot camp — for example, we now have the only toll road in

the world that has been open for nine months with no tolls on it. It's amazing. It's an artistic success but we're losing money on every car. I guess we'll make it up on the volume because there are no tolls.

I say those things because here we go again: the government embarking on a commission. If they do what they did here to a bunch of other things they've done, we'll have chaos. As I say, we in the Liberal caucus are supportive of modernizing our financial community. I shake every day thinking about this government being in charge of that, however, based on their track record.

**The Acting Speaker:** Comments and questions?

**Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt):** I wanted to commend the member for St Catharines — it's good to see him on his feet in this place actually making a speech; it's refreshing — and the member for Timiskaming, who I thought did an unbelievable job of taking this bill apart. I choose my words carefully. I wanted to commend them both for their presentations. I must say I, myself, will be speaking on the bill later, I hope, but our critic for this area is the member for Timiskaming, who has had —

**Mr Len Wood:** No, Lake Nipigon.

**Mr Laughren:** What did I say, Timiskaming? I'm sorry, the member for Lake Nipigon.

**Mr Len Wood:** The member for Timiskaming quit the NDP in 1986.

**Mr Laughren:** I don't need to be reminded of that.

The member for Lake Nipigon is our critic on financial matters. He's had a lot more dealings with high finance than I have —

**Mr E.J. Douglas Rollins (Quinte):** Than most people have.

**Mr Laughren:** Than most people have had, and continues to have these kinds of dealings. I'm sure I share the view of most members of the House when I say I look forward to hearing the comments from the member for Lake Nipigon, who will be able to speak as soon as we shut up.

**The Acting Speaker:** The member for St Catharines has two minutes to respond.

**Mr Bradley:** I'm pleased to respond to the people who have responded to me on this. I appreciate their comments.

I was particularly intrigued by the comments from the member for Cochrane North, who talked about the fact that maybe we could have a commission — because this is a commission — to deal with gas prices in Ontario. I thought his observation was most appropriate. He remembers, though he was not a member of the House, that in 1975, Bill Davis didn't say, "I want somebody else to solve this problem." Bill Davis seized the opportunity and passed a piece of legislation which froze gasoline prices here in Ontario.

He didn't care what they were doing in other provinces. He didn't care about anything else. Bill Davis said, "If there's a problem in Ontario, I know it's provincial jurisdiction; I've looked up the constitutionality of this," and Bill Davis moved forward with action right here in Ontario. Not for Bill Davis to fob it off on the feds or anybody else; he took action.

I suspect as well that if he knew about the predatory pricing law that I've proposed in this House, which is certainly a pet project of my friend the Conservative member for Quinte, Bill Davis would want to see this government implement both of those.

As well — because this bill mentions commissions — he set up a one-person royal commission while this freeze was in effect to assess the impact of this and to determine whether there was any collusion or what was happening with the gas pricing.

Bill Davis didn't look to anybody else. He said, "I know it's in Ontario's court." His advice to the consumer and commercial relations minister in Saskatchewan is probably: "Forget bothering with anybody else. Let's just tell them we're going to take action here in Ontario ourselves. We're not just going to huff and puff in Ontario."

**The Acting Speaker:** Further debate?

**Mr Pouliot:** I will be sharing the time allocated to the third party with the most distinguished dean of the House, the former Deputy Premier and former Minister of Finance, no less, the member for Nickel Belt.

You will briefly allow me to say how moved I was by his comments. At one time he mentioned, en passant, that the finance critic for the New Democratic Party was the member for Timiskaming. The member for Nickel Belt, the dean of the House, has been here a long, long time and at times I can understand there's an element of fatigue. With the workload that he has to address, it's only normal that he would forget so many friends.

He will be contributing. He has insisted. He came to my office about half an hour ago and said: "Mr Critic, I understand you have been asked to offer our view, our thoughts on the matter. May I, member for Nickel Belt, etc, ask that you share your time? There are some subject matters of some importance. I wish to be analytical. Yes, I will be meticulous, I will decipher, I will scrutinize the bill. I might even, time permitting, go into an in-depth analysis of the clause-by-clause."

I will, with some anxiety, wait for the comments from the dean of the House, our cherished and beloved member for Nickel Belt.

1710

Mr Speaker, allow me a departure from form to compliment with all the sincerity at my command the good people in the minister's office, members of his political staff, and of equal importance, members of the Ministry of Finance, who time and time again, hour after hour, spare no efforts to share their expertise by way of information, by way of briefings to members of the official opposition and to our party. The intricacies associated, not with this proposal, this issue, but with some bills, are of importance, and without their help the opposition could not begin to debate and to suggest positive alternatives. That deserves more than a verbal pat on the back; it deserves an acknowledgement. Mr Grimmett, Madame Bassett, your venues have made available the very good people both in the minister's office and in the ministry.

Bill 140 — and I've heard my colleagues discourse on it — if you're listening, is as dry as dust. It was an invita-

tion for them to embrace the generic. They saw one word here, one word there, and they said, "We'll talk about this," because they felt that in the context of legislation this has no sex appeal, this is not one of the main motivators in life. It's almost like being a wallflower at a party: You don't have the motivation to really participate.

Listen to the title: Overview of Financial Services Commission of Ontario Act, 1997. The purpose of the bill — what does it do? — is to establish the Financial Services Commission of Ontario as an agency of the Ministry of Finance, replacing the Pension Commission of Ontario, the Ontario Insurance Commission and the deposit institutions division. Three of them become one. It's going to be fairly big-time. I can only wish well to whoever gets appointed as chair of the commission.

The government will say, "It's done elsewhere and it works." The government will echo that there's a need to simplify, to expedite, to cut through red tape, to streamline, and who's to disagree? We too, like our brothers and sisters in the official opposition, say we will support the principle, the intent, what's in the compendium, but given the track record — and I must say this with candour. I say this is going to work. I read it. There's a few pages. It's going to be simpler. The province will save some \$3.8 million, somewhat consequential over a period of two years, so it must be good. It's not because the government of the day says something that automatically you must oppose, you must find some substance.

Having said this, I ask myself some questions, not wishing to be the devil's advocate, not being cynical in the least. But then there's one side of me that says, "Examine their track record." If only I could simply say that this bill, as given, underwent a good deal of scrutiny, has been well thought out, that they thought about the pros and cons, considered all alternatives, consulted and listened to the client group, and then in their search for equilibrium, for balance, they came up with the reflection in the bill by way of solution, by way of improvement, making things better. Alas, I am not totally at ease and my sentiment vis-à-vis their effort is what I've just mentioned.

Bien au contraire, et vous le savez. Nous avons aujourd'hui en Ontario un gouvernement en hâte. Ils font tout changer. On nous dit, surtout avant de passer un projet de loi sur le papier, «On l'a étudié, on a su écouter la clientèle, les contribuables, Ontariens, Ontariennes.» J'aimerais bien y croire quand on nous dit, «Nous l'avons fait.» J'aimerais bien, comme vous, Monsieur le Président, être certain que c'est la vérité. On n'a rien parié pour nous assurer que tous et toutes aient été consultés.

Bien sûr, si vous êtes du groupe des mieux nantis, si vous faites partie de cette classe particulière qui sont les privilégiés, vos chances d'être non seulement consultés mais d'être écoutés sont meilleures que celles des groupes marginalisés, ceux et celles de la classe moyenne, ceux qui dépendent un peu plus du système, les vulnérables, ceux et celles qui courent moins vite, les pauvres, ceux qui en ont moins à cause de l'appétit de ceux qui n'en ont jamais assez.

We talked about the appointments to the new commission. When we mesh, we web, when we make three bodies becoming one, there will be some appointees, and one of the criteria is vague. Some will say it might be an invitation to excess. Expertise, a group of experts, that's all it says, and that expertise will be a primary condition of appointment.

I've heard it said, vis-à-vis the future appointment, that it will demand the closest of scrutiny. Someone whom I had a frank discussion with mentioned, "Let's make sure that we don't end up with political appointees with, let's say, Tory hats." That's what he said. I said, "I don't believe that any government would stoop to that level, that as a condition of appointment to that commission it would suffice to be a card-carrying member of the government du jour, the government of the day."

I think we don't have the resources to go and visit every golf course to check on every foursome and caddies and then go and spend additional time at the clubhouse. This is not our role here. This is a bit of a blind faith exercise, but we will be watching to see that a good cross-section is appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council.

We don't wish to have a stacked deck, because it's far too important. We will be talking about financial institutions. We will be talking about the board, which is quasi-judicial, and people will have recourse. We will be talking about women's and men's pension plans, lifelong toil in exchange for a bit, some financial security by contractual arrangement, by defined plans. We want to make sure that if there is a snag, those hours and years of work will not be jeopardized because of a bias, because of minds made up in advance because they are sold to a philosophy.

1720

The way you ensure this is by diversity. When we say people from all walks of life, providing they can carry the load, they can digest, assimilate the act, then you will find the equilibrium, the balance. The checkmarks will be in place by virtue of good appointees representing all sides of any issue. Otherwise, if it's a political appointment because you're in the back pocket of people with influence — and let's face it. When we talk about bankers, I don't know the presidents of banks. All I know is that when I read the Report on Business of the Toronto Globe and Mail, I don't see many women appointed as chairpersons of those major banks.

My notes tell me, for instance, that at the Bank of Montreal the chairperson is presently the flamboyant Matthew Barrett. The notes I have talk about his recent commitment, his recent marriage. It's quite an occasion indeed, so I too, as we always do in matters of this kind, wish everyone well. The picture doesn't show his house — it shows the happy couple — but I'm sure the house must be a trophy house, something I would have aspired to had I lived long enough and had the power of compounding interest.

Simply put, we want to make sure that the appointees reflect the consumers. Talk with people at the credit union. They want them to put the brakes on in terms of this bill. What's the big rush? People at the credit union don't

know at this time what the annual fee will be. This will be done by regulation. They won't be there to make representation. It doesn't work that way. The opposition will not be there to make representation. The meeting will likely take place between 8 and 10 pm, and there will be a stack of regulations that will give life to the bill. The bill is important, the intent and spirit of the government, but the regulation is the oxygen to the bill.

They are not rich. They're not like the big banks. They are competition to the big banks, pretty well the only competition we have, the *caisse populaire* and the credit union, but they don't wave a big stick, they don't have as much clout as the big banks, of course, or as the big insurance companies. They are in the bill too.

They say: "How does it impact us? What about the fee structures?" We say: "No, no, give us your acquiescence. Say that you, as members of the *caisses populaires* and as members of the credit unions, agree with cutting red tape, that you agree with streamlining. Trust us. When it gets to regulation we'll make sure it's not too onerous, that it doesn't cost you too much, that you're not penalized by way of fees vis-à-vis your ability to compete, that this will be taken into consideration." Well, if you're in doubt you say no.

They're asking that this bill be referred to committee and that they be invited in, given a chance to voice their support and also their concern. Will this happen? Will this bill go to committee? Highly unlikely, and there are reasons; there is some justification. Although this is somewhat consequential, it is not paramount; it is not very high on the list of priorities. So it will gather a little dust on the shelf and then it will receive third reading, royal assent, and it will become law.

Les craintes des caisses populaires, vous les connaissez bien. M. Grandmaître les connaît très bien. Ajoutez-y les craintes bien fondées de ceux qui n'ont pas la même force, la même capacité de se défendre des banques à charte. Je vous connais très bien. Je sais déjà que vous partagez mon appréciation, et aussi mes craintes, vis-à-vis des banques à charte. Avec ces gens, il faut un peu se méfier, parce que plus on est gros, plus on prend de la place et plus on se fait entendre. Mais les caisses populaires sont sur les listes d'attente. Ce n'est pas la même chose.

Donc, je vous encouragerais, comme membres de l'Assemblée, comme Vice-Président de la Chambre, d'être vigilants, d'être sur vos gardes. J'irai même à vous conseiller amicalement, Monsieur le Soldat: attention. Quand on parle de ces gens, il faut être en alerte, il faut avoir le geste sûr.

With what is happening and what is about to happen in the pension department, one cannot be too careful, one cannot be too vigilant vis-à-vis this commission. The 1997 Ontario Budget, Budget Papers: Investing in the Future, more important, presented by the Honourable Ernie Eves QC, Minister of Finance — I draw your attention to page 42. This is an official document. This document here is the most important document we have to debate. Little else matters because in these books you will find the philosophy, the intentions of the government, where they will take

their money, where they will spend the money allocated to them, our money, the public's money.

1730

"Pension Benefits Act Reform": I hope my good friend and colleague, for whom I have a lot of respect, Mr Bill Grimmett, will listen intently. I'm sure he knows the reference.

"Ontarians have indicated that the province's pension legislation is complex, inefficient and costly." This is the government saying this.

"They have also experienced frustration because of an inability to access their pension money in locked-in retirement accounts, specifically in cases of hardship.

"To address these and related concerns, the government" — we, the Progressive Conservative government of the day in Ontario — "will consult with the pension community on ways of streamlining the regulatory system while ensuring that employees' rights are protected. The government is also interested in exploring with other governments" — fair — "the possibility of moving towards a single regulatory regime for pensions."

Then we begin to understand that this bill could possibly take on extraordinary proportions when the rubber hits the road. You know what's happening in the pension world. More and more people are encouraged to buy in.

Let's say Harry Smith worked 28 years for ABC company. Harry Smith is a member of a defined pension plan. ABC company said, "Harry, you will be getting \$1,000 a month if you work for 25 years." Harry's got his 28 years in. Every month he gets 5% taken off his paycheque, the company matches the 5% Harry Smith puts in, and that 10% of what he makes becomes a defined plan. Over 25 years it will generate so much money and he will get so much pension if he's age 55, 58, 60.

Then ABC decides that they will buy out, that Harry is not to get a thousand bucks a month. Harry has been privatized, and in lieu of the commitment they will go to actuaries, accountants, people who know that. They will say, "Harry, in order to get you \$1,000 a month, we will give you the equivalent, and you will be worth so much." Let's say they give Harry \$130,000 in lieu of. That \$130,000 becomes what Harry has — nothing else. But since the employer was a contributor, it goes into an RSP. But in this case it's a locked-in RRSP. The conditions are as such: Harry Smith will not have access to his locked-in RRSP before he is age 60.

There's a real Harry Smith. He can be any one of us. He's a person in my riding who worked for Noranda Mines for 32 years, was commuted, got a little more than the \$130,000 or \$140,000 I was talking about. The person is in his late 50s; he has cancer. It's a true story. He and his wife wish to go to Europe to see the place of birth. He is pension-poor. Because of the lock-in provision, he can only take 7.55% out each year, and when he gets to be 80, he has to buy an annuity. The insurance company is telling Harry, "But the money will be around." And Harry is telling the insurance company, "Yes, but I won't be." It's his money. Yet we have someone else who has another self-directed RRSP, the same as Harry has, but his is

not locked in. So they're both subject to a minimum, but the locked-in one, because of the LIF, the life income fund, only allows you to take so much out. You're capped and it goes to the insurance company. It's automatic. In the other plan, you have a minimum through a RIF but you have no maximum. And the governments are saying "We want the taxes"? Is this fair?

This is a growing monster. More and more people are being commuted, are being bought out, because companies do not wish to assume the liabilities and responsibilities of future pension plans. They don't have the same flexibility they once had because of scrutiny about the surplus fund, so they're under the gun, and rightly so. What they choose to do as an alternative — and I'm not impugning motive. It's not for me to say whether it's right or wrong. A buck is a buck here. But, excuse me, something has to be done. This is self-serving. It is not fair to deprive people of the ability to access their money when it is so rightly theirs. It is not consistent with other RRSPs, it is not consistent with your life savings, it is not consistent with your worldly possessions, ie, house, car etc; only in this monopoly, in this cartel that represents an attitude of yesterday.

Thankfully some provinces are beginning to exercise some flexibility. They see the light. There's a human dimension. It's a good case. It's a true story.

We are asking our constituent to write a letter to the carrier explaining his dire need, accompanied by a certificate from the MD and the specialist to back his case so he can have access to the fruits of over 30 years of service.

It makes no sense to me whatsoever. No one wishes to be unjust, but what are we supposed to tell Harry? "Tell you what, Harry, go to the broker or go to whoever is carrying the plan and tell them you want to transfer to an RRSP. Don't even mention the lock-in. Do it two or three times and then some clerk on a busy day in February, before the end of the RRSP season, will be too busy and you'll become legit." You can't ask Harry to cheat. It's not done. What about the consequences? People get imaginative. You can't ask Harry to take his money and run. He wants to pay his taxes. That's one example of the need to address this legislation.

You say, "What would you do?" One proposal would be to treat it the same way as an RRSP, and if you need some money — you might not wish to take everything out of it. Unless you need it, it would be stupid, because the tax burden would be so high. Both Revenue Canada and Revenue Ontario would take their share, would take their cut. You may wish to take a little more, but providing you take the minimum — and now I understand and I don't disagree with age 69 in lieu of age 71 — a little painful for some; not much of a window. It might go to 65; I don't know. Mr Martin professes no ulterior motives. But again, with those people, sometimes they wish to access whatever pool of money.

1740

That's not as troublesome as the locked-in provision, the straitjacket provision. My friend Harry Smith is locked in. They've locked him in. With a pension, they should

have issued him a set of handcuffs: "Here, Harry. Welcome to retirement."

We'll be on our feet again to talk about the pension proposals. I understand that some consultations are taking place. It says right here that consultation will take place with the pension community.

I'll tell you what: I was outside the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it is right downtown. All you have to do is look up. I see all those towers. I see Canada Life; I see the banks; the business community is well represented. I hope that when we talk about the pension community — to me, the pension community is the person who feeds the engine, feeds the locomotive.

Yes, Harry Smith, that's the pension community. It is his earned money; nothing else matters. It's much easier, I suppose, to return the phone call from a person of consequence, a person whose name is recognized so easily, a person with money, a person in a high position. They take a cut. They're not on the take; they take a cut. It's a fee for service. I don't mind. Give Harry Smith the opportunity and the flexibility to access a small dream, the lifestyle that they both worked for for so many years, decades, to enjoy. After all, it is their money. They've made their contribution in good faith. They too believed that one day it would be possible. Yet the present system does not allow that.

There are other people whose dire needs are not as stringent, as visible as our friend Smith's, but I realize that we must be consistent; we don't wish to deprive people who have maybe a little more under locked-in provision. We have to be consistent. We can't start making exceptions left or right. I readily acquiesce to that. Our focus here is on people who need it. The system must be fair.

This is a bill that raises more questions than it wishes to answer. The government says it will improve customer service and access to financial services. How will they do this? The bill doesn't say this. It's not a statement of platitudes; it's not shallow, hollow, empty. But you don't have any meat here. When you say you will improve services, what is it we're talking about? How will I as a client benefit from those improved services? Where, when, how? Bill 140 doesn't do this.

The commission will allow the insurance industry and the pension industry to not only be self-regulating, but self-policing as well. I hate to give that much power to a person. What kind of guru would be given this much power? Are you judge and jury at the same time? But the good people at the ministry are saying: "Mr Pouliot, it ain't so. The chair and the vice-chair will be part of the board." I said, "They don't make the law." They said: "No, the statutes make the law. The law is the law. They monitor, and then if you have recourse, you go and see them." I guess they change hats, but there will be other people who will be different.

That's supposed to be our guarantee of their goodwill, our guarantee of fair play and success. I believe it will be, although I can't help but be a little en garde; not suspicious, but quite careful when I see the same people trying

to satisfy two mandates that are not completely opposite or irrelevant or different, that are in fact quite similar in many cases. There again, we will be watching very carefully.

I want to go back briefly to the representation. The order in council will appoint. People will not be invited to submit. I guess names will surface by some fashion, somehow. If you tread in those circles, you know who they are. I understand they might be the same people. Those are experts. This is positive, I think, indeed. But nothing in the bill says that, for instance, labour will be represented. They're very much concerned. They pay for all this. What they are saying is: "We don't want to take over the board. We just want to be part of the appointment process. We don't want to be straitjacketed to the point where we only represent labour. That's not what we're saying. What we're saying is make sure that the checkmarks involve people who understand, are familiar with all."

I've just received a note I want to share with the House. It says: "Mr Pouliot" — it's handwritten — "My husband and I have delayed our supper. Keep going. Mr Laughren does not need to speak." My apologies. There's also another half. It says, "Your maturity will be gauged on whether you share the contents of this note with anyone."

I'm not getting tired, Floyd, and you will have a chance to speak. I want to thank you very kindly.

Back to the subject matter. We wonder, why is the government so anxious? I don't wish to be cynical; it's not in our nature. I don't wish to be even controversial. When I came here 13 years ago, I was so happy. It made me appreciate the lack of job security; that's how I got the job. Then I entered here and said: "These are well-meaning people. This is not a place where 90% of the politicians give the other 10% a bad reputation. Of course not."

I started to read between the lines, say for about five years, and started to lose that candour and always looked for the unwritten word.

1750

There's no emergency. We will be supporting this. We're not here to oppose. But we're here to help and we're here to speak on behalf of the credit unions. They say: "Give us public hearings. Give us a chance to access the blue suits opposite so you can tell us face to face how much you are going to charge us each year." It's a fair question. We will be the liaison between the *caisse populaire*, the credit union and the government. We will put our positive shoes on. We want them to be on board and we want them to trust, for we believe that when all is said and done in the context of Bill 140, this is a step in the right direction. It is not a monolithic platitude. It makes sense. It will work, and we are on your side on Bill 140. Thank you to the people in the ministry. Thank you to those directly responsible for sponsoring the bill. Thank you, Mr Speaker. I'm listening to Mr Laughren.

**Mr Laughren:** I would like to express my appreciation to the member for Lake Nipigon. It's a measure of his generosity that he has left me this much time to engage in the debate this afternoon, and I appreciate it.

I did want to take part in the debate, even if it's not for a long time, on the establishment of the Financial Services Commission, because I can recall talking, thinking and even doing some work on this kind of commission when we were in government. I was supportive then of this kind of move, which basically puts the back rooms, if you will, of the commissions together and has a common front room called the commission itself, so I personally have no problem supporting this.

I obviously have some concerns about the commission, and I did want to put them on the record. I won't go into a clause-by-clause discussion of my concerns, but the commission itself is going to be a very important commission in the province and I worry about finding the people to make up the commission who will have the breadth of knowledge on all these issues. It's no longer one small commission; it has brought them all together. I worry about that, because there will be a limited number of commissioners.

I know there is a provision in here — which I thought, by the way, was a telling one; probably a good one but also a telling one — section 6 under "Tribunal." They have already said that the tribunal will appoint at least six persons and not more than 12, but then subsection (6) goes on to say, "Despite subsection (3)" — which deals with the six and 12 number of members — "the Lieutenant Governor in Council may appoint additional members to the tribunal for a limited time and purpose and the order appointing the member shall provide that the member's participation is limited to specified matters or classes of matters within the jurisdiction of the tribunal."

I think that's a telling admission of the concern in the Ministry of Finance, which I think is appropriate, about the ability to deal with all the issues that are going to come before that tribunal and to have the kind of expertise available at the time it's needed to deal with those kinds of appeals and so forth. I'm a little concerned about that.

The other matter I am concerned about is the role of the superintendent. The superintendent, who will basically run the commission, if I can put it in layman's language, will "be responsible for the financial and administrative affairs of the commission, exercise the powers and duties conferred on or assigned to the superintendent, administer and enforce this act...supervise generally the regulated sectors." The superintendent is going to be a very powerful person. It's going to be a very important position.

When you put together the powers of the commission and the responsibilities of the commission, which basically are then — if I could use a phrase that I hope hasn't been debased by the currency, you are downloading the responsibilities of the commission basically to the superintendent. I'm not quarrelling with that in principle, but it does mean that the superintendent is going to be someone who's going to have to have a wealth of knowledge and hopefully some experience in a wide number of areas, because that's a very tall order of responsibilities for the superintendent. There are many good people out there in Ontario's public service. I think there are still a few left who

perhaps can carry out those responsibilities, and I sure hope that you find them.

I'm glad there are a couple of minutes left, because I wanted to talk about the assessments. By the way, before I get into the assessments, in the preamble — I think it was in the preamble; sorry, in the explanatory note to the bill, and I don't know whether the parliamentary assistant has a copy of the explanatory note with him. In the explanatory note, at the end of the very first paragraph: "The Lieutenant Governor in Council can assess the entities that form part of each of the regulated sectors to recover the costs that the commission" — so far, so good — "and the ministry incur in regulating the sectors." I hope those sectors know that it's not just the cost of the commission that they'll be anteing up for; it's the cost of related matters that the ministry itself deals with. It seems to me that's breaking new ground.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Laughren:** Well, I think it is. I can understand why the sectors should pay for those, and I don't quarrel with that, but if I were them I'd be a little jumpy about the ministry being added into that.

The power to assess is very broad and will be done by regulation, which in itself is I don't think is that surprising because lots of fees are set by regulation and quite frankly I suspect you won't know yet what the costs will be for each of the sectors. Maybe there's going to have to be a trial period here to see just what it is that each of the various sectors cost, because some sectors will cost a lot more than others, I would assume. I don't even know what they would be, but I assume that some would cost a lot more than others.

Also, the bill is written quite carefully in that regard in that it even talks about any fees that are paid by a particular sector will be taken into consideration when assessments are made against that particular sector. So I can understand the desire to be very careful in that regard.

I don't know how each of those sectors is going to know that they've been assessed fairly. I'd appreciate when the parliamentary assistant has an opportunity to respond at some point that there be an explanation of what happens to a sector that perhaps is somewhat taken by surprise by this. I'm thinking of the credit union sector, which I don't think is that happy with this model. How are you going to satisfy that sector that what they're being assessed is fair vis-à-vis the other sectors that are also being assessed? Not that they should not be part of the assessment, but how will they know that what they've been assessed is appropriate?

I worry about those assessments and the private sector is going to be sceptical from the beginning about this commission, even though I'm sure they're not in disa-

greement with the principle involved. But they're going to be sceptical about the costs of running it; I would suspect they tend to be. When it comes to anything the government does, the private sector is sceptical and thinks it should be done much more cheaply.

I note in subsection 25(6): "On request, the commission shall recommend to the Lieutenant Governor in Council the manner in which the regulations made under this act should determine the share of the assessment in respect of a regulated sector and the share of the assessment payable by an entity that forms part of the sector."

I can see that the government has looked at this very carefully and I'm sure it's trying to protect itself in terms of assessments to the various sectors.

As I said at the beginning, I am concerned about the commission, not in principle, because I support the principles that are in this bill and I support the way in which it's being done, with the one commission, the chair, two vice-chairs, and the superintendent and the director being on the commission. I'm not sure why the director is on the commission, but that's what it says in here. I'd appreciate knowing that.

The superintendent, I would almost think, would be an ex officio member of the commission, because to have that hands-on person as a member of the commission, I find a bit strange. You obviously want them there, but it's almost like a board of directors at a community college or any other institution — a community college is the system I know best — where you have the board of directors and you have the president there as well, the hands-on president of the college. That's fine, because you need to have that hands-on experience and expertise. But I wonder about the director in particular and the superintendent, to what extent they're seen to be full voting members of the commission, as opposed to being more ex officio in nature.

We know that if we're going to have a financial services sector in the province that has the confidence of the public — not just the business community but the public as well has got to have confidence because there have been fiascos in this province. I'm thinking of the trust company fiascos and so forth. There have been fiascos in this province and people expect that they will be regulated appropriately. There's almost a blind faith that government will look after them, whether it's a bank or a trust company. In my own community a trust company went under a couple of years ago when we were in government, and it happened to happen in my own community, so there was a lot of concern about the protection of —

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin):** Order. It's now 6 o'clock and this House will adjourn until 6:30 this evening.

*The House adjourned at 1802.*

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Claude L. DesRosiers

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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 10 September 1997

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 10 septembre 1997

*The House met at 1830.*

### ORDERS OF THE DAY

#### UNIFORM FEDERAL AND PROVINCIAL CHILD SUPPORT GUIDELINES ACT, 1997

#### LOI DE 1997 SUR L'HARMONISATION DES LIGNES DIRECTRICES FÉDÉRALES ET PROVINCIALES SUR LES ALIMENTS POUR LES ENFANTS

Mr Flaherty, on behalf of Mr Harnick, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 128, An Act to amend the Family Law Act to provide for child support guidelines and to promote uniformity between orders for the support of children under the Divorce Act (Canada) and orders for the support of children under the Family Law Act / Projet de loi 128, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le droit de la famille pour prévoir des lignes directrices sur les aliments pour les enfants et pour promouvoir l'harmonisation entre les ordonnances alimentaires au profit des enfants rendues en vertu de la Loi sur le divorce (Canada) et celles rendues en vertu de la Loi sur le droit de la famille.

**Mr Jim Flaherty (Durham Centre):** Madam Speaker, I'll divide my time with the member for Ottawa-Rideau.

I am pleased to move second reading of the Uniform Federal and Provincial Child Support Guidelines Act. As the title clearly indicates, this bill is intended to provide a consistent approach to calculating child support under federal and provincial legislation.

As you are aware, jurisdiction over family matters is split between the federal and provincial governments. Federal law applies to child support ordered in cases of divorce while Ontario's Family Law Act applies to child support ordered in all other cases, for example, separations.

We are asking the Legislature to take action to bring the Ontario Family Law Act into line with the federal government's child support guidelines which took effect May 1, 1997. Prior to May 1, all child support orders were determined case by case. Under the guidelines, judges and parents will now calculate the amount of child support in divorce cases by referring to a support table or grid. This support table sets out the amount of child support based on the payor's income and the number of chil-

dren entitled to support. At the same time, the guidelines will allow for some flexibility to pay more or less than the support table amount in certain circumstances.

Since May 1, 1997, there have been over 1,400 applications to vary Divorce Act child support orders under the new child support guidelines. Over 40% of all child support orders in Canada are made in Ontario. If we in Ontario did not amend our Family Law Act, we would have two sets of laws: one for parents who proceed under federal law and another for those who proceed under provincial law.

**Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands):** You want that for gun control. What is different here?

**The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley):** Member for Kingston and The Islands, come to order.

**Mr Flaherty:** The result would be confusion and inequity for both the parents and their children.

The Ontario government is acting on the advice of legal experts and community organizations who stressed the importance of a consistent approach to calculating child support that treats all Ontario families the same. These amendments create the authority to incorporate the federal guidelines and a table of awards into Ontario's Family Law Act for the purpose of determining the amount of child support for provincial cases.

Guidelines are used in many parts of the world. They provide an opportunity for Ontario to move to an approach that will make it faster, easier and less expensive to determine the level of child support.

The Ministry of the Attorney General has already put into place the most comprehensive implementation plan of any province in Canada to inform Ontario's families about the guidelines. The ministry's services include, first of all, a toll-free public inquiry line, which has already received over 9,000 calls since May 1, 1997; second, trained staff in every family court to provide information; third, approximately 58,000 consumer information kits have been distributed to the public and are available through the court offices in Ontario; and last, public information sessions on the guidelines in conjunction with local lawyers. Pilot sessions began in June and a full series of sessions will be held in 43 communities across Ontario starting October 22, 1997.

In the interests of children in Ontario, I urge all members to join with me in expediting passage of this bill to provide for a consistent approach to calculating child support in Ontario.

**The Acting Speaker:** Further debate?

**Mr Garry J. Guzzo (Ottawa-Rideau):** I rise in support of the Uniform Federal and Provincial Child Support Guidelines Act. We're asking in this bill that the Legislature act now, and act quickly, to bring the Family Law Act of Ontario into line with the federal government's support guidelines which have been in effect since May 1 of this year. In doing so, the same approach to calculating child support will now apply to all Ontario families. The guidelines will apply regardless of whether a support order falls under the jurisdiction of the federal Divorce Act or under Ontario's Family Law Act, which covers child support orders in all other cases, for example, separations. It will apply whether that order is made by a justice of the General Division or a judge of the provincial court here in Ontario.

In harmonizing the guidelines, our government is acting on the advice of legal experts and community organizations. These experts have stressed the importance of providing Ontarians with a consistent approach to calculating child support, an approach that treats all families the same; not necessarily fairly, but equally. The guidelines will replace the current practice of determining child support case by case. The method of calculation now under the guidelines is based solely on the ability of the non-custodial parent to pay and has no reference to the economic condition of the custodial parent.

These current practices provide an opportunity for Ontario to move to an approach that will definitely make it easier, faster and less expensive for the parents to determine the level of child support required in each circumstance.

It's interesting to note that the same approach has proven effective in many parts of the world, in fact in every state in the United States and other countries such as Britain and Australia. At the same time, most Canadian provinces have either moved or are moving at this time to introduce legislation to bring in these guidelines. As the parliamentary assistant to the minister has indicated, the Ministry of the Attorney General is ready to implement the guidelines. We have already put in place the comprehensive implementation plan, as comprehensive as any other province's, to inform Ontario's families about the guidelines.

1840

Our services include, as was mentioned, a toll-free public inquiry line, but most important, knowledgeable staff in every court to provide the information required to the people who are the clients of that court, be it the provincial court or the General Division; information kits for parents to help them understand the guidelines and the process and public information sessions conducted by local lawyers in 43 communities. These public sessions will commence in the third week of October this year and the opportunity for the public and members of the bar to become acquainted with the process will be widespread.

For implementation here, the guidelines are not alleged to be perfect. But if we do not act to amend our Family Law Act at this time, we will have two sets of laws, one for parents who proceed under federal law and one for

those who proceed under provincial law. It's bad enough that we're faced with a situation where we have two court systems, one for people with assets and one for people without assets. If we were to fail to amend the Family Law Act and adopt these guidelines at this time, it would result in further confusion and inequity for both children and parents.

It is in the interests of the children of Ontario that I feel compelled to support and ask members to expedite passage of this bill in order that we provide a consistent approach to calculating child support in our province. But I hasten back to the point I made with regard to the issue of two court standards and two courts with which we may find ourselves in the province if we're in a position to be dealing with a family support matter. That is a source of concern and one this government has taken some steps to rectify by expanding the Unified Family Court process.

I acknowledge that the circumstances in which we find ourselves in that regard have been alleviated to some extent but not in every corner of the province. Notwithstanding that admission, I urge you to take immediate remedial action with regard to this situation that has existed since the implementation of the guidelines by the federal government on May 1, 1997, and bring this particular situation into a uniform position regardless of the legislation under which persons find themselves proceeding in family support action matters.

**The Acting Speaker:** Questions and comments?

**Ms Annamarie Castrilli (Downsview):** I'm pleased to hear the comments that have just been made. In principle this is not bad legislation. I think we'd all agree that whatever we can do to expedite the support provisions so that they're applied consistently and fairly and with some flexibility is good: recognizing that children are different from one place to another, that their economic circumstances may be different, and recognizing that therefore you have to make some adjustments with respect to support provisions. This is a piece of legislation that in its stated objective is good, I'm happy to say. Certainly on this side of the House we will do what we can to see that this bill is passed.

Let me voice one concern, though, amidst all the accolades I've heard on the side. There's one area which I'll elaborate on later but which I'd like to highlight here, that legislation is only as good as the people who are prepared to act on it. While this legislation has some noble goals and while it sets out very clearly what is expected of the government and of people who are dealing with child support issues, given some of the experiences in other areas, it's not at all clear that this legislation would be enforced. The success of this legislation depends on its enforcement.

To the extent that we don't enforce support orders, we are doing a grave injustice to children all over Ontario. That, I think, is one of the lessons for us all to take away from this discussion this evening. Enforcement is going to be the key to ensuring that we have equity for all children wherever they reside in Ontario.

**Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre):** I was listening to the member for Ottawa-Rideau's comments on this bill in another place over the television. I want him to know that I think it is very important that we be very clear in Ontario about what this bill can and cannot do and what it actually means. I think the member did a very good job of outlining why this bill is important and what the elements would be.

The member for Downsview pointed out that however good it is to make a synchronicity between what happens at the provincial level and at the federal level, it really depends on the enforcement and the way in which all this works through the courts.

This is an issue that goes back to the whole issue of child poverty. That was the reason why there was a good deal of agreement, even though it took a long time to work out the details, that something needed to be done about ensuring that there was some rhyme or reason to the way support payments were actually done, that we were focusing on the needs of children and on the responsibility of their parents to offer the necessary kind of support to those children in their lives.

It is extremely important, as we talk about this bill, to talk about the issues of child poverty and how this bill will or will not affect what is becoming a very serious problem in our community. I would join the member for Downsview in saying that while we are supportive of this bill, there are many connected issues that will impact on whether or not it makes a difference to child poverty.

**Mr Tony Ruprecht (Parkdale):** We are, on this side, going to support this bill, but at the same time I'd like to state that it may be a good idea if we were looking at specifically the enforcement mechanisms. Without enforcement mechanisms being in place and being acted upon, this bill will be fairly weak.

The second point I want to make is that I hope this is only a precursor to the government's ability to really do something about child poverty. When I say "precursor," I would only hope that this is one step in the right direction. Most of us would agree, because I think all of us in our constituency offices hear horror stories about support payments. We know the effects that dislocation and no support payments will be having a direct impact on child poverty.

But at the same time, while we discuss this issue, I would expect that there is a second step to be taken seriously, and that is to look at all aspects of child poverty. I think we haven't done that yet. I know it is in the power of this government to act. While all of us would agree that Bill 128 is a step in the right direction, there is much more that needs to be done.

1850

**Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon):** This Bill 128 makes, simply put, the provincial guidelines parallel to that of the federal guidelines. It has an enforcement aspect to it, but in the real world, if for instance the family support system cannot deliver, the train has already left the station; you've really missed a part of the implementation.

Not so long ago, the United Nations announced with great fanfare that we were the recipients of yet another laurel, whereby Canada was the best country in the world to live in. But there were some caveats. One of them was youth unemployment. The other was child poverty. Child poverty is certainly not something we wear well, in the year of our Lord 1997, in such a vast, magnificent and resourced, beyond the privileged, blessed land, and it impacts on all of us. We have an opportunity, in supporting the bill, to issue some recommendations, but more important, to highlight the plight, the high percentage, the catastrophic percentage of children who are not given the tools to integrate, to defend themselves, simply put, "to be like the others." Those will not be afforded an opportunity to look to the future with confidence unless collectively and individually we bring forth a better focus.

**The Acting Speaker:** Member for Durham Centre, would you like to wrap up?

**Mr Flaherty:** The Family Responsibility Office, in response to the concerns of law enforcement, is now in the process of heading more front-line client service officers and introducing advanced technology such as document scanning and imaging to enable that office to work more efficiently.

I'm sure there are concerns by parents with respect to where information can be obtained concerning the guidelines, which are of course very important in dealing with child support issues in the province. The province is already offering a number of services aimed at providing parents with the information they need to understand the guidelines, and ideally to reach agreements before they have to go to court.

Information officers are based in the busiest courts, and all courts have trained staff to provide information to help people filing variation applications. It is the goal of this legislation, guidelines for child support, to make the system easier, faster and cheaper. The guidelines replace the current practice. The current practice in calculating child support is a case-by-case system. For the vast majority of parents, the guidelines will mean they can determine the amount of child support that a judge would likely order without going to court. In most cases, this should reduce conflict and the need for delay and lengthy negotiations and court proceedings.

I thank the member for Downsview for indicating her party's support for this legislation and her desire that it be dealt with expeditiously, and also the member for London Centre for indicating the third party's support of these guidelines. The provinces of New Brunswick, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, British Columbia and Prince Edward Island have either passed legislation or have introduced legislation to adopt the federal guidelines or some form of them. Most of the remaining provinces and territories are also doing so.

**The Acting Chair:** Further debate?

**Ms Castrilli:** I welcome the opportunity to speak to the second reading of Bill 128, which was, as we know, introduced in this Legislature by the Attorney General and the

Minister of Community and Social Services jointly on May 1, 1997.

The goals of this legislation are quite commendable. The bill should provide for consistency in child support and in child support guidelines and provide uniformity between the Divorce Act of Canada and the Family Law Act of Ontario. It should also allow for flexibility to the courts so they can determine the appropriate amounts of support that children will receive. As I stated earlier, it is important that we treat children fairly in accordance with their economic circumstances, their geographic circumstances and other circumstances that may be brought to play before the court. If the courts are to adjudicate properly they need flexibility, always remembering that what is important above all is the best interests of the child.

I say the goals are commendable because all children in this province and in Canada, I think we would agree, require our full attention as legislators. I hope we can also agree that there should be no children who are forced to go hungry, that there should be no children who are forced to suffer cold, a lack of education, a lack of clothing, and that all children in this province and in this country should be nurtured and treasured and well cared for, as they represent our future. There should be no higher priority for us as legislators than the wellbeing and the future of our children.

It's for these reasons that this is important legislation. At first blush it looks simply like an administrative piece of legislation, but the bill attempts to rectify a very serious flaw in our justice system by providing the uniformity and flexibility I talked about before. I hope we bear in mind that it is the child and the child's interests and best needs that we must be responsible for collectively.

I wish that were the end of it, but we must look at this bill in terms of the context in which it is presented, in terms of the context in which so many children live in this province and in terms of the context of the record of this government on children's issues.

**Mr John O'Toole (Durham East):** Oh, come on.

**Ms Castrilli:** To the member opposite, I say examine your record and you will find a lack of understanding of the fact that many children are at risk. I remind you that this is not just a political opinion on this side of the House; it is a term, "children at risk," which has been used over and over again and in report after report of late by very credible agencies to indicate that we have a problem of growing proportion in this province that we must address. To ignore that reality is foolish, because in ignoring that reality we not only ignore the future of these children but we diminish the future we have as a province.

It's trite to say that children are the future, that it is they who will take us into the next generation and to the next century, but it is true. Sometimes the most trite things spell the truth. It is the children we must care for because it is the children who will inherit what we have, and what they will do with what we have is critical.

If I'm passionate about this issue, it is because there is no more important issue for us than looking after our

children. It is an issue that is not being dealt with — I say that with all sincerity — either sufficiently or well.

I will not bore the assembly with every single piece of legislation that I believe should be mentioned here. Look at this government's record; look at the type of legislation that affects children in this province and the types of policies you have put into place since you came into power. I say you may even have done that inadvertently. I don't really want to ascribe bad faith to anyone, but look at the record. Education: You've cut billions of dollars; you've cut junior kindergarten. That will affect the quality of education of our children and the kind of competitiveness we can have in the future. Social services: Again you've cut billions of dollars.

Our leader put a question to the Premier in the House today. You may remember that our leader went to visit a woman who was on social assistance. On arriving at her apartment, they opened the cupboards, they opened the fridge, and there was no food. This is not a fairy tale or a rhyme about Mother Hubbard and her bare cupboard; this is Toronto, Ontario, 1997, ladies and gentlemen. It's a shocking disgrace that we would have people in our society, in our midst, single mothers with small children who cannot afford to feed them — not next week, but today for dinner. It's appalling.

**1900**

On family support, where do we start? This is a bill about support. It's timely to talk about the kind of record this government has with respect to support. Family support: a plan in shambles. In all these cases and so many more, it is the children who suffer, children who cannot fend nor speak for themselves — we all know that — children who don't have powerful lobbyists arguing their case, children who don't come down here to protest. We, all of us, bear a collective responsibility for them, but it is this government and its decisions that must be reviewed. There is simply too much at stake.

I want to look for a moment at the family support plan. We've had numerous examples in this Legislature of the difficulties it has caused, the chaos it's in. You may remember that Bill 82, which made changes to the family support plan, was introduced on October 2, 1996, with great fanfare. It was going to resolve all these problems; it was going to make sure that women and children got their due. It was to make sure that money that was paid into the plan would be paid out to its proper recipients.

The object, of course, is quite simple: A parent pays into the plan; the plan pays out to the family. The results, we all know in this House, have been an unmitigated disaster. Rather than closing the regional offices and creating this chaos, the tools to pursue court orders should have been given to staff in the regional offices in the first place. This is legislation about court orders. You've taken from the communities where women and children are at risk those very tools they could have used to enforce the support that is owed to them in the first place.

Instead, this government has a disastrously poor record with the concerns of vulnerable people. In your revolutionary zeal, you have focused only on the end of reducing

government, without caring or considering how to achieve those goals and who will be hurt. The track record on the family support plan by all accounts is miserable.

I just want to refer you to some of your own documents for proof of the statement I've just made, to assure you that it is not simply political rhetoric but is indeed fact. According to your ministry's estimates, the percentage of cases in arrears was 77% in 1994-95, 76% in 1995-96 and 77% in 1996-97. This wonderful system you introduced has not performed as you hoped it would.

Incredibly, this government has the audacity to claim it is making progress with the new centralized office. This government claims that it wants to run its operations like a business. Quite frankly, if this were a business, the Attorney General would be fired for gross incompetence in the FSP. Every day, the constituency offices of MPPs all across this province have been flooded with complaints from constituents, from anxious parents —

**Mr Gerretsen:** Including the Tory offices.

**Ms Castrilli:** My colleague from Kingston and The Islands says, "Including Tory offices." In fact, some of us have had to take cases that Tory backbenchers did not wish to take. Anxious parents have been calling, have been asking, have been pleading that they are in dire financial circumstances, that they need the consideration and the attention, and often that isn't given.

In fact, in many cases money that is paid in is not paid out. This isn't a question only of deadbeat dads; this is a question of money that's been legitimately paid to the plan and not paid out to women and children. Always we hear the call that no adequate consideration was given to the closing of those regional offices that dealt directly with the women.

The situation is so serious that the Ombudsman, Roberta Jamieson, issued an unprecedented section in her annual report which criticized the government's handling of the family support plan. I'm sure you will agree that Ms Jamieson is a neutral advocate of citizens in dealing with the difficulties of government. She has a great deal of credibility. She is not a political partisan. I think it is worthwhile to consider her observations about the FSP. Overall, Ms Jamieson noted that while the Ombudsman "regularly handles complaints about the family support plan's operation, these calls and inquiries were increasingly characterized by high levels of desperation and personal crisis." And you say the family support plan is working.

It should first be understood that the Ombudsman began her investigation about the FSP on November 15, 1996. On her own initiative, after about three months of receiving complaints from clients of the plan, she documents that by the end of October 1996, the situation had deteriorated to the point that "the number of calls to my office regarding the transition had doubled over the previous month" — doubled over the previous month, and she documents that the month before it was extraordinarily high, and the month before that.

You will recall that on August 15, the regional offices of the family support plan were closed. That's why the

increase in calls to the Ombudsman. There was nowhere else for these women to go. One person told the Ombudsman's investigators that it was not until the afternoon of August 14 that the assistant deputy minister informed the program managers of the layoff of 85% of the personnel in the centralization plan. Imagine, the day before you close the regional offices, you told people they wouldn't have a job the next day.

The Ombudsman also found that 60% of the staff, by her own account, who received layoff notices chose to leave rather than work the six-month notice period. Those running the transition simply assumed there would be more staff willing to staff during the transition. They also simply assumed that many of the regional staff would be willing to work at the new location. Again this assumption proved wrong, and if I may say so, it proved wrong because the homework wasn't done. Had there been consultation, had there been understanding of people's needs, you might have eliminated that crash in personnel which occurred shortly after August 15.

You locked the regional offices and the only way to access the plan was through the phone line to Toronto — a hardship for someone living in Thunder Bay, a single mother with no means of support. At one point there were only four people in that office in Toronto, responding to phone calls that came from all over the province: four people to cover all the requests from all over the province, where once there had been eight regional offices, completely staffed.

While the Attorney General apologized for the transition problems, it is important to see this as a failure of the whole government. The Ombudsman's report indicated that the decisions regarding the transition planning were made by cabinet, whose decisions, she says quite clearly, she cannot review. But it's unmistakable: The decision was a decision by cabinet and therefore the responsibility of the government. The mess in the family support plan can be traced right to Mike Harris's doorstep.

#### 1910

In what can only be described as a pitiful attempt at a rebuttal, the Attorney General has claimed that there have always been problems with the family support plan. Even if that were the case — and that isn't the case; I have argued in this Legislature before and documented the history of the support plan legislation — it doesn't change the fact that you do not solve the difficulties by exacerbating them, which is exactly what this government's crash attempt at the transition did.

The Ombudsman dismissed the Attorney General's perspective and chose to focus on the transition period itself. Imagine the extent to which the Ombudsman must have been driven, to initiate her own investigation of the family support plan. Imagine the frustration she must have heard from woman after woman after woman that caused her to take this unprecedented action.

It's sometimes the case with us here at Queen's Park that by looking at the overall picture we tend to lose sight of the specific realities in individual cases. We tend to get lost in abstraction and we forget the very real difficulties

that individuals face across this province. I'd like to focus on some of those.

I heard one of the members opposite say the system is now working fine. Well, the problems continue to abound. We still have complaints of computer deficiencies, bureaucratic delays, telephone calls that are not returned, 1-800 numbers that are constantly occupied, files that get lost, cheques that are not passed on and a massive caseload.

Let me share with you some of the cases, and they come from all over the province. From Kingston, for instance, my colleague from Kingston and The Islands will know, we have a number of cases. Some of them are really quite staggering. They deal with not only the issue of poverty but also the issue of enforcement, which I have touched upon before.

One of the cases is Sandra Foley, who has said we can use her name because she's so outraged at what is happening. Her husband is \$4,000 in arrears and the Family Responsibility Office has lost the two court orders she got regarding this case. Here's a mother who went to court to try and get her support enforced. She goes to the Family Responsibility Office thinking they are going to enforce this and, gosh, they lose it, not once but twice. It took six months finally, after the first order was received, to implement it, and the second order, which was lost yet again, took even longer. That's unacceptable. We're talking about a woman who wasted more than a year with the Family Responsibility Office trying to get her money.

We have Eerie Jackson. In her case, the support payments are supposed to be in the amount of \$650 a month. Her husband chooses to pay only \$200 a month and the Family Responsibility Office has absolutely no power, no interest and has done nothing to collect the moneys owed to Mrs Jackson.

We have another individual whose husband owes over \$7,000 in support. The request for the federal licence suspension which was promised by the Attorney General — this driving licence suspension — was met with resistance by the Family Responsibility Office because, as people told this particular individual, they don't know how to implement the new legislation.

We've made these grandiose promises of how we are going to enforce payment and we're simply not delivering. It's the women and the children who are suffering.

From Windsor, we have a woman whose husband is a successful business owner and who now owes almost \$5,000 in child support. The FRO contacted the spouse in this case and managed to get one month's support and just stopped there, did not enforce the order this particular individual has.

The list goes on. From Sudbury, we have numerous cases, as we do from Kingston, Windsor, from any city and any community that you wish to indicate. We have one particular woman in Sudbury whose husband paid into the plan once, paid into the plan twice, paid into the plan numerous times, and none of that money has found its way to this particular woman's family.

This is very serious. I could go on and list name after name, individual after individual, but the reality is the same: The plan is not working. The support that women and children deserve, the support upon which courts have adjudicated, is simply not reaching those who need it. So we have situations where women come to us and say: "I can't feed my children. It's getting cold and I can't buy them a coat. We're getting close to Christmas," as in fact was the case many times in my office last year, "and we have no money for gifts for the children. We don't even have money for necessities."

And the government does nothing. In fact, it certainly has not taken steps to enforce the judgements that are outstanding once these judgements are obtained. It doesn't even enforce its own designated wishes to suspend licences. None of that has happened. The government is adding to the burden of child poverty in the province with utter disregard for the consequences.

Let's just look at the facts for a moment: 97% of parents ordered to pay child support are fathers. Of these, about 76% are in arrears. Ontario fathers owe approximately \$1 billion. You would think that alone would be an incentive to the government to seek to enforce the support orders. The evidence of women all across this province is that the government is in fact doing very little with respect to enforcement. Instead, I think it's plain that the government, in an effort to find more money for its tax cut, has closed regional offices, has made services less accessible, has lost files, has lost cheques and has contributed to the delay by not sending money to children that had been paid into the plan by their parent.

While it is important that we understand that the family support plan isn't working, the key issue and the point I really want to focus on is that when child support is not paid, it is the weakest in our society, women and children, who suffer. They suffer because they can't heat their homes, they can't feed their stomachs and they can't clothe themselves. Basics that we take for granted in this Legislature are denied to so many people.

Imagine the spectre of a mother having to worry night after night what she will do with her children the next day. Imagine the woman who came to see me in my office last Friday and who said: "My husband is well-to-do. The judgement orders are not being enforced, and I will have to leave my place of residence because I can't afford the rent at the end of the month. Can you help?"

#### 1920

The issue has become one of female and child poverty, and this government has actively contributed to that child and female poverty since it took office. I don't believe they realize that their actions and inaction are hurtful and have a rebound effect, not just economically but also psychologically. This issue demonstrates once again this government's agenda pointed against the most vulnerable. Is it any wonder that the Ombudsman decided to take such unprecedented action?

One may well ask what has been done to alleviate this crisis. The offices of MPPs right across the province continue to be overwhelmed. We continue to hear from

individuals desperately seeking information on the status of their cheques and files, many of which are months in arrears due to computer problems, backlogs and reduced staffing. They are crying out for help to make ends meet on a day-to-day basis.

All the talk we've had in this Legislature about how the plan is up and running, how the plan is working, how the backlog is being diminished, how more money is going out to children and women, is negated by the overwhelming evidence we have in our offices of women and children who tell a different story. All I can say to the government is, shame on you for allowing this to happen.

In tandem with the family support plan and the chaos it has created, we need to look at the overall performance of this government with respect to children's issues, because after all, Bill 128 addresses the concerns of children. Let me be clear: This government has continuously failed children and that stands in marked contrast to the fact that my party and my leader have made children a personal priority.

At the end of 1996, for instance, the Minister of Community and Social Services called for a cut in salaries of day care workers of \$4,500, people who earn only about \$19,000 annually to begin with. What a misguided action that was. What lack of understanding of the fact that the people who care for children at such sensitive, early ages should be individuals who are the most qualified and get paid accordingly. They deserve better respect and better pay.

The Conservatives claim to be putting their fiscal house in order, but to do so they have cut junior kindergarten, which all studies say improves the prospects of children. There isn't a single jurisdiction, aside from Ontario, that hasn't said that putting money in early childhood education is good for the country, is good for progress and is good for prosperity. Clearly this government has lost sight, in its zeal to reduce the deficit has forgotten, that it is the means to create a better society, not the end.

A very influential group of individuals came together in November 1996 and issued a report which they styled Campaign 2000. The stated goal of this group is to eliminate child poverty by the year 2000. They've documented in their report that one in three children in Metro lives on welfare. Remember the mother my leader visited who had no food in the house? That's twice the rate in 1989, in case you happen to look at the stats. We've doubled the rate of children on welfare in just seven years. We now have 70,380 children who use food banks in this city — 70,000 children whose parents have to go to food banks. The government's slashing of welfare rates by 21.6% has just added to this difficulty and has plunged more and more children into poverty.

I want to cite some of the cuts to children's services. Again, I'm using your documents, the estimates of the Ministry of Community and Social Services, with respect to this. Community support services have been reduced 8.2% from the 1996-97 estimates. The figures are these: from \$19 million to \$17 million. Child and family intervention services have been reduced 2%. Regular child

care has been reduced 3.2%. Child treatment services have been reduced. The list goes on and on. There is scarcely a program that hasn't been reduced.

You'll forgive us if we're a little sceptical about the intentions of this government with respect to children. Let me rephrase that: We're not sceptical, we're worried about the directions of this government with respect to children. We're terrified that you are doing irreparable damage to a whole sector of our society.

So important is the role of our young people that the Metro Task Force on Services to Young Children and Families — that's a task force that was set up by the municipality of Metropolitan Toronto because they were concerned that there were so many children going to food banks, going hungry, appealing for help. This Metro task force was set up to look into this issue. They published a very interesting report, called *The First Duty*, indicating that our first duty is to our children, that they are the most important thing we should have on our minds in any society. I see members opposite nodding their heads; I'm glad we have agreement.

If you read that report, it's quite shocking. It makes recommendations that are staggering, because the numbers of children that are neglected, that are ignored by the actions of this government are quite high. According to the task force, in 1996 over 89,000 children — 36% of the population — under age 10 in Metropolitan Toronto lived in poverty. What a horrible statistic — 89,000 children, 36% of the population of the city.

I commend this report to you. I think it's extremely factual. They took great pains to consult widely. They spent great time in consulting experts and listening to all of the stakeholders and doing a phenomenal amount of research, all of the kinds of things that one would expect from the government before it presents its legislation and policies. It's really quite a masterful work and indicates just how serious the problem is and that we really have no time to deal with this. We have to hurry to resolve the problem.

It's for that reason that our party has created a task force on children, a task force that is now going out across the province to listen to child care experts, to listen to parents, to listen to educators, to listen to children themselves about their situation, about their circumstances, about their wishes, about their desires. The premise, of course, is that investing in children is just that: an investment, that whatever we spend on children will come back to us many-fold. We've already started to see some interesting examples.

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I'd like to share some of these with you because you may not have had the opportunity to follow the activities of this task force, or perhaps you have in your various communities. It's very interesting; one of the early presenters was the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies. These are the front-line professionals. These are the ones who get called in the most extreme circumstances and they are the ones who provide that first initial care in the most acute situations.

I just want to read a little bit from their presentation to our task force. There's a section that talks about funding and resource pressures, because that is one of the issues that is clearly a problem. I'll just cite: "Over the past several years, CASs have been subject to significant reductions to base budgets." In 1995 there were two decreases, one of 1% and one of 1.25%. In 1996 there was a decrease of 5%.

"There has been a net loss of 545 full-time equivalent positions....

There has been a loss of 350 positions since January 1995" alone. They conclude, "There is no rational funding formula for child welfare in Ontario."

Clearly, with increasing caseloads, with more and more children on welfare, with more and more children at risk, our first duty is not being discharged. When you eliminate that many positions from the children's aid you create incredible caseloads, you create incredible pressures and you make it impossible to serve the people who are most at risk, the children who are most in need of counselling, of assistance, of foster care.

There are so many people who have come forward so far. Other child care workers have indicated that a lot of kids won't be ready to even come to school prepared because they come from broken families or are living in poverty. Already they're falling behind. And we don't have the resources in this wealthy province, we don't have the people in this well-to-do society to look after children? That's really what the story is.

There have been reports — this is from Barrie — before our task force that child welfare case workers are simply overwhelmed by the workload. In Simcoe county, where there used to be an absolute maximum of 21 cases per worker, they're now dealing with 28. The presenter says: "That's simply too much. It means we can't do our job. The government is taking our most vulnerable population and putting all the blame on them, but it's not their fault."

There's no question that children have to be a priority, and this is what is emerging in the task force. Every single presenter has said too much has been cut too fast and the ones who are suffering are children. It really is within this context that you have to look at Bill 128. It's really within the context of a total neglect of children's issues, of ignorance of the consequences that children are being made to suffer because of the actions or inaction of this government.

Bill 128 will amend the Family Law Act to require a court that makes or varies an order for the support of a child to do so in accordance with child support guidelines established in the Family Law Act. The provisions of the act are very straightforward. The court may order an amount different from the amount determined under the guidelines where special provisions have been made for the care of the child to the point where the guidelines would be inequitable. This is one of those things that I alluded to before. It's very good to have that kind of flexibility in a piece of legislation allowing the courts to be able to take into consideration the various circumstances.

There are a number of circumstances that are set out that require special attention in the legislation. For instance, the court may also order an amount different from that set out in the guidelines on the consent of both parents, giving credit to the fact that if parents can agree on a different amount, that should be allowed. You should not be precluded from making an agreement which is in the best interests of the child, as long as the court is satisfied that reasonable arrangements have been made for the care and the support of the child.

The ultimate result of this legislation, as I said at the beginning, is that it should add a degree of flexibility to child support by giving discretion to the courts to act in the best interests of the child involved. Those are welcome provisions. There's no question that children all over the province will benefit from the discretion of judges applied judiciously, applied with all consideration of the circumstances for the benefit of the children.

Let me say that we in the Liberal Party are in favour of whatever efforts can be undertaken to provide for the support of children, the adequate support of children. Compatibility with the federal guidelines should assist a great deal in reducing confusion and ensuring that children get the support they deserve efficiently and effectively. Frankly, this is an area where it sets an example for cooperation among the levels of government which can only benefit the ultimate consumer or user or client in this particular case. We should have more examples of situations where provincial legislation and federal legislation help one another, streamline one another, piggyback on one another, rather than making it more confusing and more difficult, as often is the case, for individuals.

It is, however, ironic that this government is introducing this bill after adopting such a rigid approach in the transition to the family responsibility office, resulting in the needless suffering of thousands of children and needy women.

One final point needs to be made. The directions of this legislation are good. They are good for a number of reasons. They are good because we actually have a piece of legislation that is considering children and what they need. It's good because it harmonizes with existing legislation and makes it easier for women and children to receive the support they need. Finally, it's good legislation because, with any luck, it addresses the issue of child poverty in a small way.

But here's where the problem lies: The problem really is one of enforcement. The family support plan reminds us — the reason I went through all the examples I did at the beginning — that if there is no enforcement, not in legislation, but actual physical enforcement of the provisions of a particular piece of legislation, it will be a worthless piece of legislation, just another piece of paper.

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The message to the government is this: They must be prepared to ensure that support orders are paid. Streamlining is good, but it doesn't put money in the pockets of women and children. You must enforce those orders. You must ensure that the judgements obtained by women and

children are respected and acted upon and that you commit enough resources to ensure there is enforcement. Women and children in this province are looking to you to ensure that. They deserve nothing less than your promise that you will enact the legislation which will be passed here.

Finally, we endorse the principles behind this legislation and we urge that its provisions be enforced by this government, but we also call upon members of this government, including the ones who nodded when I talked about the importance of children, to examine very carefully their record on children's issues. Do not minimize children because they are young and because they are silent. All of the studies I have cited here today show over and over again that we can't afford child poverty. We know for a fact that every dollar that is spent on children in the early ages will save us \$7 in social services down the line. So there may even be a very good economic reason for doing this. Our success as a country depends on a healthy, active and well-cared-for youth component. We can't afford to let our young people down.

We will support your legislation, but we'll be looking very carefully to ensure that you enforce those orders and that you ensure that women and children have the means to feed and clothe themselves, and we'll be watching your record, as will women and children all across this province, on what you will do to combat the crisis in child poverty in this province.

**The Acting Speaker:** Questions or comments?

**Mrs Boyd:** It's a great pleasure to have an opportunity to comment on the speech from the member for Downsview, because she of course is very experienced in this area and was very clear about the importance of bringing Ontario's support guideline into concert with the new federal guidelines.

The member made very good points about the issue here being the issue of child poverty and how we can begin to deal with it when parents, for one reason or another, are not together in supporting their children. It is very important that we recognize that we are discussing this bill in connection with the very serious problem that is faced by children who not only are looking at the problem of having their parents no longer together, but may be seeing a huge change in their entire way of life when that marriage breaks down.

What the federal government was doing, in concert, I may say, with the provincial governments over a number of years, was trying to figure out a formula that would make a better consistency around how we support the costs of raising children in our various provinces. It was always anticipated that when the federal law came into place the provincial governments would bring their laws into line with that, because of course the federal Divorce Act only covers federal jurisdiction, and most separations, for at least part of the period of time, tend to occur under provincial jurisdiction. So the member is quite right that taking this step in Ontario is a good way for us in this Legislature to take some steps towards supporting children as they should be supported.

**Mr Flaherty:** I listened with interest to the speech by the member for Downsview, particularly about the family responsibility program, the importance of supporting children in the province financially. I couldn't agree with the honourable member more, and in 1995 our government inherited a plan that was completely broken, that was in a disastrous condition because of the conduct, the failure of the members opposite.

There it is. In 1995 the regional offices served 0.4% — that's not 4% but 0.4% — of FSP clients daily. Did we sweep the problem under the rug? No, we addressed it.

**Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma):** You destroyed it. You threw it into chaos.

**The Acting Speaker:** The member for Algoma, come to order.

**Mr Flaherty:** At that time in 1995, before we consolidated the regional offices, there was a backlog of 90,000 pieces of correspondence that we inherited from the previous government — unbelievable neglect in FSP offices across Ontario. I agree with the member that that sort of conduct is totally unsatisfactory when the purpose of the program is to achieve proper enforcement of support for children.

Some of the backlog went back to 1993. That is correspondence from 1993 that the previous government had not answered by the time they were thrown out of office in 1995. This is correspondence about the support of children in Ontario. I couldn't agree with the member for Downsview more that that sort of conduct is simply not acceptable when we're dealing with an issue as important as the support of children. That's why our government was obliged to undertake this major reform we have done, so this sort of 90,000 backlog will not occur again and is not occurring now.

**Mr Gerretsen:** I found the comments from the member for Durham Centre absolutely amazing. If the situation really was the way you said it was, why did you fire 350 people who worked for the plan? The fact is that the Attorney General here in the House made probably one of the most unusual and amazing statements I've ever heard. We all remember that day when he said that he thought they were doing quite well under the plan because they were actually returning 50% of phone calls that were made into the plan.

Now, for a party and a government that likes to pride itself on running the organization in a businesslike fashion, I will tell you, if you ran any business in this country or in this province on the basis that you would return only 50% of the phone calls that you get to that business, you wouldn't last very long. Let's stop the nonsense. If it was in such bad shape, as it were, why did you fire the 350 employees of the plan? Why did you close the regional offices? Why did you centralize the whole operation while in the meantime husbands were paying into the plan for months on end and the mothers and children who were relying on the support payments that were being paid into the plan were not receiving the money? Why did you do that?

Even if, hopefully, it is better than the way it was six to nine months ago, you by that action are hurting the people who are the most vulnerable in our society and you should have done something positive about it rather than fire the people you did, which perhaps even made a bad situation an awful lot worse. Shame on you.

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**Mr Wildman:** I came into the House to hear the comments of the member for Downsview, which I found to be a very serious analysis of the problems facing children and child poverty in this province, a discussion of the bill that was important and useful for this House. But I am most disappointed that that kind of presentation by my friend from Downsview would be denigrated and mocked by the member for Durham Centre, where he doesn't take the situation of child poverty seriously at all. Rather, he would like to make cheap political points in the House when we are dealing with a very important piece of legislation.

The fact is that we have had problems and have had considerable problems with the family support plan for some time. We all know this, but when this government came in, instead of trying to improve the situation, what did they do? The Attorney General decided to close all of the regional offices and lay off the staff. They weren't getting their calls returned, so what do you about it? You make it more difficult to get their calls returned. They weren't getting their support payments, so what do you do about it? You make it even more difficult for them to get their support payments.

You don't care about child poverty. You just think it's going to be nice to be able to say to your wealthy friends: "We laid off a lot of people. We cut the expenditures. We don't have to spend that money." If kids are suffering as a result, if fathers who want to give their support to their kids are unable to get that support to their kids, that doesn't matter. If mothers are suffering because they aren't able to support their kids, that doesn't matter, because you can say to your wealthy friends, "We laid off a lot of civil servants."

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you. Member for Downsview, you can sum up now.

**Ms Castrilli:** I can't imagine there are no more comments. I'll be happy to respond.

The parliamentary assistant tried to obfuscate the issues. Just to put in context the number that my friend from Kingston and The Islands mentioned, those 300-plus employees you fired represent 85% of the personnel of the family support plan. You tell me how you thought you could have any kind of efficient service with only 15% of the employees. You tell me why the Ombudsman took the unprecedented step of having her own inquiry because she received an increase of more than 51% of calls with respect to the family support plan, plus numerous requests from MPPs because they could not get through; they couldn't do any good for the people who were coming to them.

When you talk about the family support plan, you should be ashamed of yourself. It's a colossal failure. It's only the jewel in the crown of your failure when it comes

to children and children's poverty. You have no business standing in this House and defending a record that is indefensible. I wonder how you can sleep at night, quite frankly, knowing that there are people who are starving in this province, and they happen to be children and they happen to be single mothers and they happen to be people who don't have your connections. That is absolutely indefensible. Shame on you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Further debate?

**Mrs Boyd:** I'm pleased to have an opportunity to speak tonight to Bill 128 because it is an important act. As both opposition parties have explained, we have very strong reasons for wanting to support the act in many ways, but wanting to support that within the context of the other issues that affect its enforcement.

I was quite struck that while the member for Durham Centre was raving on a few minutes ago, I came across an editorial that was written on March 8 which described what this bill was all about in terms of the Attorney General. It was entitled "Diversionary Tactic," and it reads as follows:

"Attorney General Charles Harnick should be trying to fix Ontario's family support plan instead of bashing the federal government for its new child support guidelines.

"Harnick and Interprovincial Affairs Minister Dianne Cunningham have called on the federal government to delay the May 1 launch of a new law that beefs up enforcement of child support orders and changes the way courts will calculate such awards.

"They warn that families in courts don't have enough time to figure out the new guidelines before they go into effect and that the new law will cause chaos in provincial courts.

"Funny that Ontario seems to be the only province worried about the problem. Attorneys general from all other provinces say they can meet the tight deadline.

"Could it be that [Charles] Harnick is desperately searching for something to distract from the mess he has made of Ontario's family support plan?"

It is now September 10, and just like the family support plan legislation that created the Family Responsibility Office, we find this government calling this bill now, this many months later. We waited and waited and waited in the fall for the government House leader to call the bill that put the Family Responsibility Office into place and put in tighter enforcement guidelines for Ontario to collect child support. When they finally called it, the government tried to pretend that somehow the opposition parties were delaying that bill, when in fact that wasn't at all the case. We had been willing to discuss the bill, to move it through as quickly as possible, and this bill is the same kind of story.

The reality that is faced by women and children in this province is that although the federal act changed on May 1, 1997, all of those orders that are there under provincial law will not apply until this act goes through this Legislature, the legislative process, and finally is called into action by being proclaimed.

We've already seen this huge delay. We sat all of May, we sat all of June, we sat most of August and we're now into September before this bill even gets called for second reading. Let's be very clear that the Attorney General's initial calls for delay in the implementation of this bill, as far as it pertains to orders under provincial law, he has succeeded in obtaining simply by not having this bill called, by delaying the passage of this bill, which both parties have clearly indicated we are prepared to support.

A lot of people don't understand that split jurisdiction issue, and it's important when we're talking about this bill that we really be very clear about what happens. If you have a divorce, if you are divorced under the Divorce Act of Canada, it applies where married couples are divorcing and they seek child support as part of that final divorce application.

The family law, which is the Ontario jurisdiction, applies in all other cases, and the vast majority of families that are separating go through at least a phase of that separation under the Family Law Act of Ontario. So this bill and how the guidelines apply affect the largest number of children and separated parents in the province. It is very important that the Family Law Act of Ontario be brought into some kind of alignment with the new federal law. A lot of people don't understand that at this point in time it isn't. A lot of people think, having had the publicity around the federal law changing, that it applies to everyone, and of course it doesn't.

I must say some lawyers and some judges are being very careful as they go through procedures now, knowing that this will be brought into effect and wanting not to have their clients and those appearing in front of them go through the court process for a variation afterwards, trying to follow these rules, and that is true. When we hear people say, "Well, we're doing this settlement under the new law," although it's still under the Family Law Act, it's because they have wise advisers and there are wise judges in our family courts who are looking at this law and knowing that it will, in time, be the law that will pertain.

Let's look at why the Attorney General wanted to delay this. I think it's very important in the context of what my colleague from Downsview was talking about. She was talking about the ineptitude of this government in creating the kind of change in the enforcement system for child support and spousal support in the province of Ontario.

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It always amuses me and interests me when the members across the way point out the problems in the system, which were real. There was a huge influx every month of new orders, somewhere between 1,200 and 1,400 new orders every month to be enforced by the family support plan. There is no doubt, and we have never tried to deny, that from the inception under the first plan that was put into place by the Liberals and then under our plan, it was very difficult to keep up with the kind of requests that were happening. It was particularly difficult when there were variations in those orders that frequently required a different kind of deduction order to be put into place. There were constant changes. So it wasn't just all the new

orders coming in every month; it was also the changes that happened.

I must confess that although I was disappointed that the two ministers were going to the federal-provincial-territorial ministers' conference asking for a delay in the application of the support guidelines in Ontario, there was a little part of me that thought this minister had learned from the fiasco of the family support plan. Any minister who thinks you solve the problem of an overburdened system by pulling the plugs on the telephones, closing the offices, putting all the records into boxes and leaving them lying unattended and insecure in an empty office, where all the wonderful hardware is there but it isn't plugged in and it isn't programmed and no one is staffing it, that somehow that is a way of making this more efficient — I thought, when I read that this Attorney General had asked for a delay in the application of support guidelines, that he had learned from his mistakes.

Let me read from the article in the *Globe and Mail* of February 27, 1997, because it could give us all hope that, unlike the member for Durham Centre, who still wants to defend that fiasco, something had been learned. What the minister responsible for women's issues said in this article was, "We think it" — and she, of course, meant the May 1 implementation date — "is political expediency at this point." She went on to say, "Women and children aren't going to benefit by a system that hasn't been carefully put in place to serve them." All of us who had seen the mess made of the family support plan could agree with the minister responsible for women's issues, the member for London North.

It's interesting that the Attorney General tried to say that Ontario hadn't had adequate time to prepare for the influx of requests for variations in support orders that would arise. It's really important to know that the federal law applied only to orders that came into place May 1, 1997, or after. It didn't apply to old orders; it was just going to apply from May 1 onward. But there was provision in that act for people to apply to the courts for variations, because of course there wasn't only the amount of the support that was involved here; it was the tax treatment of support payments that also made a difference, and in some families a substantial amount of difference.

The Attorney General, who pooh-poohed our concern, when he was putting the Family Responsibility Office into place, about the possibility of a huge flood of variation orders that would probably come through when these guidelines went through — and I argued this, as members who were on committee will know; I foresaw that this would be a problem when we were discussing that bill earlier on — all of a sudden figured out on February 27 that, goodness' sake, we could have 700,000 applications for changes in support orders.

One of the things that makes this particular article interesting is that first of all we hear the Attorney General predicting 700,000 variation requests. Further on he talks about there being 300,000 people on the system, and further on, 140,000 on the system. He couldn't even get these numbers right.

Anyway, the minister responsible for women's issues went on to say that the implementation of the system would catch families off guard: "People will respond inappropriately if they don't have time to be carefully counselled as to what the guidelines mean." It is really interesting to talk about this law today in light of what these two ministers had to say, because the other thing the minister responsible for women's issues said was that this was a tax grab, the federal action on support guidelines. She said, "Ontario estimates that the change, which will generally transfer the tax burden to the parent with the highest marginal tax rate, will produce another \$300 million in taxes a year to Ottawa." She neglected to mention that of course it will return about \$150 million in additional taxes to the province of Ontario.

What is important in all this is that there was a recognition by these ministers that when another level of government puts into place an act, you need to make preparation; you need to have good systems in place in order to make the difference to the population that's supposed to be affected. Isn't it a shame that those ministers didn't understand that at the time they tossed the bomb into the family support plan offices and created the chaos they created for families.

Ontario had 14 months to prepare for the putting into place of these family support guidelines. This had been discussed for a number of years. It came about after much federal-provincial discussion, after a very celebrated court case, after much study of what had happened in other jurisdictions. The need for it was recognized through those studies. I'll quote one only, which was in California.

California is what we call a total community property jurisdiction, where all property that belongs to a couple in a marriage is community property. In California, when marriage broke down, the studies showed clearly that while women and children had their income drop by 60% from what it was when they were in the marriage situation, the male partner had his income rise by 40% on average. The disparity there is quite remarkable.

It was studies like that that prompted attorneys general across the country and the federal Attorney General to say: "We have to look at some of the solutions to this problem. What we are doing by not tackling this problem, given the horribly high level of family breakdown, is setting up a situation where we are creating a larger and larger group of children in particular, but custodial parents and children, who are falling further and further behind, falling into poverty."

It's a bit of a truism that for many women they stand sort of one man away from poverty, that when death or desertion or divorce occur, the reality of poverty strikes home very quickly. We know that child support payments for the most part are made to recipients who are women and children.

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There was no surprise at all about the work that had gone on for some five years between provincial and federal governments to try and work out a way to have more consistency in the child support guidelines, to try and work

out a system that would allow sufficient flexibility in those guidelines to take care of particular events or particular circumstances but to have some certainty for those who are contemplating a marriage breakdown, for those who are advising, either as lawyers or as counsellors in the case of a marriage breakdown, and ultimately for a judge in making an order. It wasn't a surprise. The federal government put its discussion paper out 14 months before the projected date of May 1, 1997. It is extremely sad that we see this Attorney General and this minister responsible for women's issues saying at the end of February 1997: "Oh, we don't have enough time. We want the federal government to delay implementation."

On May 1, we have first reading of Bill 128, the last possible date to signal clearly that Ontario is going to come into line. Most of the other provinces had either passed or introduced their legislation far before Ontario. Finally, it was introduced on May 1, 1997. Unfortunately, our first opportunity to discuss it is today.

From the perspective of the Attorney General, when he is facing the kind of budget cutbacks he is facing, when he is facing the kind of backlogs there are in the courts, when he is facing the problem around trying to ensure that there is legal representation in the family law area, given some of the decisions the law society has made about eligibility for legal aid, I can understand why he was apprehensive.

I think it will be very clear that applications under this new act for variations under the Family Law Act will further crowd the courts. I would have thought that as we talked about this bill the parliamentary assistant would have been announcing what actions the minister is going to take to deal with those additional backlogs that are going to occur. I would have thought there would have been a streamlined process developed, in conjunction with the courts, to ensure that the whole issue of variations, given that people, if they apply for a variation, are going to be aware that they're going to be under these guidelines — that that streamlined process would have been in place by today. As far as I know, it's not.

I worry about that, because we have also this week passed additional rules that require that those on welfare who are in a position to claim support from someone else go through that court process. It's important for us to ensure that where someone else has an obligation to pay support for children that would mitigate some of the costs of social assistance for those families, that process be very quick and very speedy.

One of the issues we really have to look at here is the fact that all the changes around social assistance, around the family support plan, around this bill, are interlocking. It is so important to ensure that when we pass a law that gives people rights to a certain expectation under that law, we have the administrative capacity to meet those expectations. They're not just the expectations of individuals, as I said, but expectations of all of us as a society, because it does have an impact on all of us as taxpayers when those who are responsible for paying support don't.

I hope to see, as we talk about this bill over the next few days and go to committee on it, a real plan, a plan of

action set out by the Attorney General, possibly in conjunction with the Minister of Community and Social Services, around how the variations that are likely to occur in court orders under this new act are going to be handled. It is going to do very little good in the short run for people if they run into problems getting their orders required under this act. Certainly, if they then run into the kind of administrative chaos that all of us know continues to happen at the Family Responsibility Office, that money is not going to go to resolve the problems of the children to whom it's dedicated.

One of the issues that underlines the concern about this whole matter, of course, is the issue of how we use every means at our disposal to encourage parents to accept the responsibility they have, once they have children, to continue to support those children. We've heard a lot about that responsibility of parents to children in terms of the kind of review of child welfare that we see the Ministry of Community and Social Services undertaking.

It is a great sadness to me personally that the federal government withdrew, in its part of the bill, the obligation of parents to support children over the period of post-secondary education. That was part of the original bill, that children who are over 18 continue to be eligible for support as long as they were pursuing post-secondary education. In the furore that occurred over having child support guidelines, that part of the bill was dropped by the federal government and, with the provincial government simply bringing provincial rules into accord with the federal rules, obviously does not exist in this bill either.

Of course most of us who are parents and who are parents of adult children know that you're always a parent. It seems to me that in this day and age of high tuition fees and difficulty students have in getting sufficient loans to go to post-secondary education, children who have been receiving child support ought to have been able to have the same expectation of that support continuing while they went to post-secondary education as many children enjoy from their parents.

When we talk about these issues, particularly as many of the government members like to talk about family values, we are talking about very fundamental obligations that we have to our children. It seems to me that when we are talking about the dollars and cents, we need to be talking about what those obligations are and defining them a little bit more clearly. Most young children don't appreciate how much it costs their parents to feed them, to clothe them, to keep them properly housed. Until you actually start to look at what it costs to raise a child, even at the, I must say, rather minimal levels we see in the guidelines — it is terribly important to understand what happens when that support is not there. It is terribly important for us to recognize that we who are not paying our responsible share of raising our children are directly contributing to a level of hardship that will affect those children for the rest of their lives.

2020

There are many, and all of us have had letters from folks, who have concerns about these guidelines. There's

the whole contingent of people who continue to confuse the issues of custody and access with issues of support. As I said to the Attorney General when he brought forward the family responsibility legislation, when he brought forward this legislation, I am very pleased that this government has resisted the urge to somehow clamp together these two issues. It was one of the biggest mistakes we saw of the initial family support legislation, because they are two different issues.

Yes, of course it is important for children to have a relationship with both their parents where that is at all possible. We know, when we work with children over a long period of time, that if somehow that contact is broken, there's a loss suffered by children. In many cases, we find children seeking the parent they haven't seen in later years in any case, because they want to know that parent. That's a natural want they have.

I'm not suggesting in any way, shape or form that it's not important for children to have the support and to have access to both their parents. Where that is possible, it is absolutely the best thing. Where it is safe for children, where it is supported by the parent who doesn't have custody and that parent is faithful in their response to children, I think that is a much healthier situation than when children are separated from the non-custodial parent, as unfortunately happens in many cases.

When we hear parents say in very blunt terms, "I shouldn't have to pay support because I don't get to see my child," it becomes a bit of a problem. If a child is being refused contact with a parent and the parent is unhappy about that, unhappy because they want to support their child and want to show they love their child and want to be there for their child, for the parent, on top of not having that kind of physical support and contact, to also withdraw financial support is a true abandonment, in my view.

These two things magnify one another. It is a tragedy for children when they can't see their non-custodial parent, but it's a bigger tragedy if they have that loneliness in their life and also do not have the financial support that keeps them going.

I'm glad this government has clearly separated off the support issues and said, "Those support issues have to be looked at here," and, as the federal government has said, "but we also need to do something on the other side, around custody and access issues." No one is trying to deny those are serious and painful issues for families. I think we do have to find some way to resolve some of the ongoing conflicts that cause the kind of pain that, frankly, haunts children for many years when that kind of conflict goes on. But it doesn't go hand in hand with support. I want to congratulate very much the minister that he has resisted all the many requests I'm sure he's had to put these two items together.

One of the aspects of this act is that child support will take precedence over spousal support in this act, as it does in the federal act. That is important in the sense that it puts right up front our commitment and our clarity about the importance of putting children first, that the support of

children is the most important call, always, on support payments.

That is not to say that spousal support isn't also important. We see millions of cases over North America where the person who is the custodial parent is also a person who has very little or even, in some cases, no earning power because of having made decisions, usually with the partner, to remain at home with children, to raise children, to do the work within the family as opposed to the work outside the family, unpaid domestic work that needs some kind of credit.

When we look at the statistics around divorce and separation, we see that many divorces and separations take place when people are in the middle- or older-age bracket. The growing tendency is for it to happen when people are over the age of 50. In many cases, those partners, if they have not been in the workforce, have very little prospect of getting meaningful and competitive employment because of their lack of skills and because of the circumstances in which they have lived.

It is important for us to be clear that the drop in the standard of living that occurs upon separation for women — and it mostly is women in that situation, although if it weren't a women it would be equally as serious — the drop in the standard of living when the family breaks down is quite substantial. When I say I'm glad that child support takes precedence over spousal support in this act, I'm not at all suggesting that we don't have to be very mindful of the real poverty concerns for older women.

There have been growing studies that show that some of the changes in both federal and provincial law over the last couple of years are leading to a newly instituted poverty among low-income seniors, people over the age of 55, in our society. The group that is the most vulnerable in that age group are women over 55 whose marriages have broken down and who have not been part of the workforce, have not built up pension over a period of time, have not built the skills and the experience that allow them at that stage in their lives to take on competitive work.

At this particular point in time, although we have an obligation to support our children, except in certain circumstances — there was one court case I recall — we do not have an obligation for children to look after parents who become destitute. So we see this issue of support payments to those people, where spousal support may be a major portion of the income of that single senior, being equally important.

2030

When we look at the whole issue of child support guidelines, we need to be looking at whether we can guarantee that these guidelines are going to remain flexible enough to meet ongoing needs. Right now, we are not in a situation where the cost of living is increasing at a great rate. We've had a relatively steady situation in terms of cost of living, little fluctuations but nothing like the cost-of-living increases that we saw in past years.

The orders that are made under the child support guidelines for the federal government and with this act, the provincial government, do not include indexing. If we go

through, as our economy becomes more robust, a period of time where inflation becomes a factor for us and our living costs are growing at an inflated rate, these support guidelines will not be indexed. We will see a loss of purchasing power very directly for people.

The guidelines do provide that if there's a real increase in the payor's income, there can be a variation in the amount according to the child support guidelines, but it doesn't take account of what happens if the payor's income drops. That doesn't change the child support guideline at that point, nor do we have any assistance if inflation becomes an issue in terms of eroding the purchasing power.

The only possibility would be to attempt to go back to court and get another variation. Of course every time you do that, you have to pay out legal fees; you have to pay out filing fees. You have to go through the process, and it's a fairly expensive process as it's set out. And unless the judge decides that there are extraordinary circumstances, which is possible under this bill, or that there's undue hardship in the case of the payor, it is unlikely that there will be a variation in the amounts.

One of the concerns that many family lawyers have talked about is the possibility of a real erosion under these guidelines of the expectations of the recipients, whether they're children or whether they're spouses. I think only time will tell how serious that is. If we manage to avoid periods of high inflation, it's less likely to be serious, but if we don't manage to avoid that, I think we will see in a few years' time a real desire to make some changes in that whole aspect around indexing.

It won't make a whole lot of difference in Ontario because the new legislation that the government brought in in terms of the Family Responsibility Office of course put very strict limits on what enforcement would happen. That new bill made it very clear that for a lot of existing orders where there was an indexing portion that was a proportion, a percentage of the payor's income, the plan would no longer make those calculations.

We have, with this combination of Ontario's bill on the Family Responsibility Office and this provision, a real cap on the possibility of having indexing as was envisioned in the early family support legislation. The early family support legislation — first the support, custody and access plan put in under the Liberals and then under the family support plan — tried to take account of the changes in earnings, the flexibility of earnings, the flexibility in terms of inflation and so on, tried to set a pattern so that every time the circumstances of the family changed, you didn't have to go for a court order for a variation.

It proved to be too complex, and one of the realities is that the backlogs that were occurring in the family support office often occurred because of the difficulty the staff had in verifying the amounts on which to calculate percentages, verifying and changing the amounts of deductions. You'd have to issue a deduction order every time there was a variation, and that was part of the problem.

So we understand, and had a thorough discussion, I think, in the discussion of the Family Responsibility Of-

fice legislation, why this government felt it was necessary to put some very strict limits on the kind of changes and variations in orders that could be done administratively as opposed to through the courts. But it does still beg the question about whether or not in the long run we will find that this scheme is flexible enough for our needs, given the way in which we are enforcing child and spousal support.

When I was briefed — and I must say I would like to thank the folks who came from the Attorney General's ministry to brief us on this, because they were very clear and did a very good job. Allan Shipley, Debbie Paulseth and several other folk came and showed us what they were doing in terms of trying to explain these changes, what they were doing in conjunction with the law society to make sure that lawyers were very clear about what the changes were, and then in conjunction with the lawyers trying to offer some seminars in the community so that recipients and payors would understand this new law. I was very pleased that there was a real consciousness of the necessity for not just public education but education of those working within the justice system itself, those who are representing clients, those who are hearing cases, those who are doing the courts administration, around what these new rules may involve.

I still believe very strongly that we are going to see an influx of variations, because I think people who are in a situation where they are receiving support on behalf of their children feel an obligation to ensure they are doing the best they can for their children.

I'm also hopeful, and I think this is very important for us to stress, that having these kinds of guidelines may stop some of the very, very contentious, very disturbing disputes that occur over support. That certainly was the hope of the federal government. It was felt that if those who are engaged in a conflict, people who are already angry or disappointed or sad that their relationship is breaking down, could know in a much clearer way what the likelihood is of a settlement, a support decision, being within a certain range, it might cut down on some of that contentiousness, it might cut down on some of the hostility.

I believe myself that it is really essential that we do even more public education about what this means. I think if people understand a whole lot more about how the court system works, what kinds of judgements they're likely to see given their particular circumstances, their particular income level, when they have a ballpark idea of what the expectations are of our society in terms of their support obligations, then some of the rather unrealistic ideas that both parties may go into a marriage breakdown with may disappear.

Those unrealistic expectations, and frankly the encouragement of unrealistic expectations, sometimes fuel repeated court actions or refusals to reach settlements before court that are not healthy for anyone. Because our primary concern here is child support, we know we are talking primarily about families where there are children, and marriage breakdown is very serious and very difficult for children to adjust to without the kind of hostility that arises around support dollars.

## 2040

There's been a lot of discussion about the harm that divorce may cause for children. Certainly for a long time the emphasis was on the breaking up of the marriage and that being the most serious part, until we started to listen to the children themselves. The children themselves were saying, "We could adjust to the fact that our parents don't want to live together any more as long as we're not expected to take sides, as long as we don't feel as though we're a commodity that's to be divided in this marriage, as long as we are not made to feel that our expectation that our parent would meet our financial needs was somehow an undue hardship on that parent."

Anything we can do, it seems to me, to lower the heat, to lower the contentiousness of situations where marriages are breaking down and children are bearing the brunt of that breakdown, will be helpful. It is my belief that if we do our public education well enough, if we create a situation in which legal representation is based on the realities of these guidelines and that clients are clearly informed about what the parameters are within which a judge is going to make a decision, we may very well be able to avoid some of the conflict that has happened. Of course if we do that, we not only avoid the pain to the families, particularly the children who are involved in that conflict, but we also avoid the very lengthy, very costly court battles that often ensue.

We're going to have to get over a hump, however, and one of the things that we would like to know very clearly from the Attorney General in talking about this bill is what his real expectation is around the volume of variation requests, the volume of court actions that are likely to arise from this. I trust he wasn't serious in saying he expected 700,000 applications for variations. It seemed like an extraordinary number to me. But I do think that if we suddenly see even 40,000 applications descend on our already busy family courts, it could be a very serious matter in terms of backlogs. I also believe that if we see the kind of fallout from applying for a variation and then applying to custody and access issues which may indeed occur, we will see a further escalation of the need for court time and obviously an increased cost in terms of enforcing this particular act.

I want to say a few things about some of the concerns that payors have about this bill, because for payors there is a lot of apprehension about this bill. We have received a few letters from payors who, since this bill went into effect, have found substantial changes in settlements that they had reached a number of years ago, where most often because of misfortune that struck their spouses that had nothing to do with the payor — a faithful payor, a payor who paid support quite faithfully over a number of years — they found themselves in the position of variation orders that required them to pay as much as three times what they had been paying in the past.

One example was a family where the divorce had occurred 15 years before. There had been a subsequent marriage on the part of both partners, but one of the partners, the new husband, was killed in a very serious acci-

dent without leaving any support for the children who were living with him and with the original wife in this group. In this situation, of course, the person had to rely on social assistance because she had no support for herself and very minimal support for the children because the agreement had been reached 15 years ago, and of course was required by the social assistance office to go back after the original partner for more support for those children. The support was granted and was increased very substantially and then created hardship for the second family of this payor.

We will all hear stories like this, and they're very serious because what they do is help us to understand the complexity of the reconstituted families, blended families, and what that means when there is a change in support under circumstances that were not expected at the time. It can indeed put a heavy burden on people.

I know, and I know the parliamentary assistant knows, that in the act the judge can look at this kind of situation and determine whether indeed there is undue hardship. But as this particular individual telling us this story said: "It may not be undue hardship in the legal sense when I have to increase my support to the children of my first marriage to such an extent that I can't afford to send the children from my second marriage to college. They are not starving. They've got a roof over their head. But they are not having the same opportunities that they would have had under different circumstances."

Those situations will occur, and I think it will be important for us to be clearly watching for the building of the case law around these situations, to be looking at how judges are addressing the issue of undue hardship to see whether the impact of this bill is substantially different from what was expected when it was put into place. I think we have to be open to looking at that.

The reality is that as we look at the family as it exists in our society, many of those families are families that have been reconstituted after having had previous families, and there are layers and layers of parental obligation. When we were talking about the family support plan, for example, the staff of the ministry who came to give the explanation of the new bill and the family support office talked to us about the number of times they had payors who were paying two or three different sets of children. That's a reality in our community, however much we may want to deny it.

When we have an act like this, we have to be sure that those undue-hardship provisions are allowing for a quality of life for second families, that those undue-hardship issues are interpreted in such a way that they don't see children of a second or a third marriage not being able to enjoy the basic privileges that their half-siblings in the previous families enjoy.

I think we have to be very wary. Whenever we change substantially an act, we need to be measuring what the effect of that is. I believe very, very firmly that the overall effect of this act when it is put into place, as long as the enforcement measures are done appropriately, as long as variations can be achieved in court to put people under

this act, will be very beneficial. I believe very strongly that it will.

But where it doesn't — and you will get the letters in your constituency office as I get them in mine, as my colleagues get them — when we have examples of places where this bill and the whole enforcement mechanism is not working for particular families, we need to be sure that we don't just ignore that, that we look at the cumulative effect of that to make sure that this legislation has the overall positive effect it is designed to have.

#### 2050

We must be very sure that in the long run the objective of this bill, which is to put more resources in the hands of children who are suffering from poverty in this society, is in actual fact happening. This bill is the one gesture that the federal Liberal government has made towards child poverty that's complete, that's in place, that's active. It is certainly one of the few ways in which we can see any positive action on issues of child poverty from the Ontario government. So it's particularly incumbent upon us to be sure that when we are looking at this redistribution of assets from parent to child under this act, it is having the effect it is supposed to have in alleviating some of the disadvantage that many young children now face with the difficulties they have in receiving appropriate support.

When we look at these tables, we know that many of the support orders that are currently in force are extraordinarily low on the scale. There are a few that are high, and there are certainly lawyers in the province who are worried that their clients may be disadvantaged if a variation is put into place based on these guidelines.

I do not think that will be the overall effect of this bill, that we will see lower payments going to children. I think this bill will see more reasonable payments to children, will see a regime that will encourage parents to accept their responsibilities for support, to avoid some of the contentious legal contests that have gone on and to try and take some of the pain out of the separation that happens. It is my hope that if we do ensure that these dollars are coming to children, we will alleviate some of the extraordinary pain we see suffered by single parents and their children in this province today.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson):** Comments or questions?

**Mr John L. Parker (York East):** I listened with interest to the comments by my friend from London Centre. There were a couple of points that arose on which I'd like to lend some assistance by way of clarification, if I might.

One of these issues was with respect to the purported delay in moving this legislation forward. I think it bears reminding the House that it's appropriate that the province waited until the federal government had completed its amendments to its legislation and brought forward its program before the province introduced its plan to amend Ontario's legislation to comply with the federal format. In this, we are joined by the other provinces of this country who have followed a similar approach.

This bill, Bill 128, was introduced on May 1, 1997, just a few weeks after the federal government finalized its

amendments. That was the same date that Quebec brought in its corresponding bill, the same date that Saskatchewan brought in its corresponding bill. Some other provinces weren't as quick: Manitoba brought in its bill in June; BC brought in its bill in July; Prince Edward Island brought in its bill in August.

We're getting accustomed to hearing those who don't support our goals in a particular legislative area accusing this government of moving too quickly. It's not surprising that when someone supports the particular goal or the general goal, we hear the criticism that we're not moving quickly enough. But in this one, we're in line with the other provinces, and we were held back, quite understandably, by waiting for the federal government.

The other issue I want to touch on briefly was the question of what sort of support and assistance there will be to help people who want to bring their agreements and their court orders into line with the new guidelines. This province is offering a number of services to accomplish that. In the courtrooms there are officers to give assistance and so on, but since the federal government changed the rules, it would be nice if the federal government would offer some financial assistance in achieving that help and providing that help.

**Ms Castrilli:** I want to commend the member for London Centre and say how much we always enjoy her very careful dissertations. I think she has a gift for pointing out very thoughtfully what the issues are, and she's done it again in this case.

At the risk of repeating myself, but I know the Speaker won't mind, I want to focus on what's really important in this legislation. The previous speaker spent a great deal of time talking about the importance of streamlining with the federal government. There's no quarrel with that, absolutely no quarrel. I think we're all in favour of a system that favours children, however we can achieve it.

I wish, however, that this particular legislation would be a model for other legislation that this government might put into place. The reality is that their record on children's issues has been totally abysmal. It has been abysmal in any number of ways which we've documented here tonight: the cuts in community services and education, in justice, in family support, where they've virtually eliminated the staff at one sitting, with 85% of the employees being targeted.

The statistics are clear. We have a growing number of children at risk, and this government, with its misguided policies, is making it very difficult for underprivileged children to survive in this province. That's the real issue here. The test for your government on this bill will be whether you will be prepared to enforce the orders we are so carefully streamlining today. That's the issue. Will you enforce it? Will you finally stand up for children in this province?

**Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York):** I want to thank the member for London Centre for her comments. The member for London Centre is very thorough in every analysis she does of every bill, and this was no exception.

I want to make a few comments about the Attorney General in relation to what he did to the family support plan. What he did was very contemptible. It was anti-children and it was anti-women. It hurt children and it hurt women in closing eight offices and in getting rid of 290 people. When you do that, you inevitably hurt the people who were serviced by it. The Attorney General denies it. Everybody in that government denies it. They say they're making the system better. We don't know how they make the system better by cutting it. We only know, through the evidence that has been given by women to our constituency offices, that they have been hurt by those cuts.

But in this case, with Bill 128, the government has done a good thing. The member for London Centre spoke to this and I think spoke to it well. We hope, to repeat the words of the member, that this bill will bring about reasonable payments to women so children will no longer suffer the poverty that many of them have suffered. We hope this bill will achieve that, and we hope the bill will achieve something more; that is, again quoting the member for London Centre, that it begins to ensure that parents accept their responsibility towards their children. Where there are errors in this bill, we'll be there, as you will, hopefully, to correct them.

2100

**Mr Flaherty:** I thank the member for London Centre for her comments with respect to the bill.

The present situation, as many parents will know, is that these child support decisions are made on a case-by-case basis. The remedy this bill proposes, following the federal remedy, is guidelines. One of the advantages of guidelines is to give parents in the province more predictability in terms of what is likely to happen in the court process in terms of support orders for children.

One of the advantages of predictability is the discouragement of prolonged and sometimes perhaps unnecessary litigation and court proceedings, which delays the goal that I think all parties agree is the desired goal, and that is getting the appropriate amount of child support promptly, quickly, efficiently and, hopefully, cheaply into the hands of the children rather than having funds used up in the court process and in litigation. So that predictability is important in this legislation.

Consistency is also important, that there is a consistent approach proposed under the guidelines for the award of child support across the province, depending on where people fall within the guidelines. Again, that has not always been the case under the present situation.

I'm sure many parents will want to know more about this program and the proposals. There is a toll-free public inquiry line. There is a booklet available with respect to the child support guidelines. More than 58,000 of these booklets have been sent out upon request. I encourage people who want information to call 1-800-980-4962.

**The Acting Speaker:** The member for London Centre has two minutes to respond.

**Mrs Boyd:** I want to thank the members for York East, Downsview, Fort York, and Durham Centre for their comments.

I would like to say to the member for York East that of course we all know that the federal government is giving the province of Ontario \$18.5 million to help defray the costs of administration and that Ontario can expect to get about \$150 million of additional tax per year because of this bill. Even with your estimate — which is a huge range; the estimate the minister gave was anywhere from \$50 million to \$90 million to administer this plan — the government comes out well ahead. The federal government is indeed contributing to making it possible for the government to administer this program properly.

I would also like say to him that I was talking about the delay in bringing this bill to the Legislature. I understand entirely that you wouldn't want to bring your bill until the federal government passed its law, which it passed, incidentally, well before the federal election. You didn't bring it till May 1 and you are only calling it for second reading now. That was the point I was making.

Member for Downsview, you are right. Let us not lose our focus that the whole issue here is transferring dollars into the hands of custodial parents so that children will not suffer the kind of poverty that is becoming only too prevalent in our communities, that we can be very sure we're doing our part to try to ameliorate that horrible situation for them.

#### **The Acting Speaker:** Further debate?

**Mr O'Toole:** It's a pleasure to participate tonight in the debate on Bill 128. Looking at the bill, it's a seven-page document, bilingual, so that means there are about three pages of actual content of the bill, so it's not a tremendous feat of legislation. None the less, I think it's important for the people of Ontario to recognize that we've listened. In fact, we're following very much the principle of much of what we're doing, which is harmonizing to make it more efficient and more service-oriented to the people of Ontario.

I'm going to read a few things that I think are important to sort of flesh out the intents of the legislation. It's important to start with the name, An Act to amend the Family Law Act to provide to provide for child support guidelines and to promote uniformity between orders for the support of children under the Divorce Act — which is federal — and orders for the support of children under the Family Law Act, which is provincial.

The preamble under the explanatory note says, "the act to do so in accordance with child support guidelines." Of course, the guidelines, as has been discussed quite broadly here tonight, are the federal guidelines. It's important to note, though, that "The court may order an amount different from the amount determined under the guidelines," contrary to what the member for London Centre said, "where special provisions have been made for the benefit of a child such that application of the guidelines would lead to an inequitable result." Very clearly, in this opening statement it says the guideline is indeed a guideline.

It goes on with "Application of child support guidelines," a very important, fundamental section here, section 4 of the bill. "A court making an order for the support of a child shall do so in accordance with the child support

guidelines." Then it goes on in the next section to talk about the exceptions and the conditions upon which exceptions will be entertained by the court.

But most important and central to this piece of legislation, as outlined in subsection 6(2.1):

"Powers of court: child support

"In the case of an order for support of a child, if the court is satisfied that there has been a change in circumstances within the meaning of the child support guidelines or that evidence not available on the previous hearing has become available, the court may,

"(a) discharge, vary or suspend a term of the order, prospectively or retroactively."

There's a fair amount about changing circumstances, to bring it to the attention of the court to interpret for the right of the child. The flexibility intended in that language is to ensure that the child receives nothing less from the support parent, or parents, for that matter.

It goes on to explain more fully exceptions and the consent orders.

It's a very readable, understandable bill, and I'd like to think it makes the process a lot more — the intent of the bill is to harmonize with the federal guidelines, take more of the activity out of the court.

The member for Durham Centre was very prudent to point out in his last two-minute comment that divorce is very unsettling for both partners and, most important, for the children. Mrs Boyd talked about the unhealthy nature of it all, not to mention that the legal implications cause it to be more of a very serious anxiety for the family unit and all the individuals involved.

That hostility hasn't been helped by the system that was in place, made up of the lawyers jockeying for the best position. It's their job to do that, I guess. But Mr Flaherty pointed out the importance of predictability. The guidelines for a family experiencing problems — and it does happen; no one wishes it on themselves — will give them a reasonable and fair guide as to what to expect. It won't have to be such a long-drawn-out process before court orders are actually passed by the judge.

Everyone is very clear on the cost. And everyone should be very clear, going into marriage, that the responsibility and the children don't go away just because the marriage doesn't work. Somebody has to pay; and it's indeed the responsibility of the parents.

But there again, circumstances change. The whole family unit is very much stressed and distressed. I've been asked, along with other members, I'm sure, to listen to all sides of this. I attended most recently in Oshawa the non-custodial parents' group. I met with people, Ted Greenfield and others. The non-custodial parents' associations, as most members here would know — when the federal legislation was being dealt with, the guidelines were being dealt with, Senator Anne Cools, who, by the way, was a Liberal senator, really kind of broke with the ranks. The people of Ontario have to respect somebody who will stand up to the anger perhaps of the Liberal whip in Ottawa, who probably was quite on her case. The then justice minister, Allan Rock, never listened to anyone on

any issue. Now he's not the justice minister any more and I think that's a good idea. He's the health minister and I hope he doesn't ruin it too.

2110

Getting back to it, I believe Senator Anne Cools was responsible for a very important amendment that passed in the Senate process of the bill hearing. That delayed it somewhat. In fact, it may have been responsible for us waiting until the guidelines were fully developed, addressing some of the inequities. Either supportive parent may be caught in a very tight situation, and once those orders are in place, that's a lifelong payment until those children aren't under your responsibility any more. Our changes to the bill reflect the changes that were supported in the Senate amendment to the original federal piece of legislation.

I've mentioned the predictability. I want to talk about the importance now — Mr Flaherty has mentioned it several times. For those listening at home, there are a number of ways of learning about the important changes. We've streamlined that process to the point where you can call a 1-800 number, a toll-free number, 1-800-980-4962. I would ask the members to treat this discreetly and respectfully. Some families have anxiety. They need to have the right information and that's where they call. It's the way you should try to get the service to the people as close to the people as possible.

Most importantly, we have these child support information booklets in our constituency offices. If you wish one, you can certainly call my office in Durham East, the member for Durham Centre, any member; the member for York East, whoever.

**Mr Parker:** Have them call you.

**Mr O'Toole:** Well, just call. There are other approaches too that are available in the courts. Also in 43 communities, starting on October 22, there will be public information sessions.

There are legislation changes. The changes are harmonized with the federal guidelines. The orders and the processes in courts should pretty much follow those guidelines, be less complicated, less litigious, less costly to both participants. We've told you where to call to find out how to get information.

**Mr Parker:** They're on the Internet too.

**Mr O'Toole:** They're also on the Internet. The important thing today is that we will use every medium of communication.

**Mr Gerretsen:** What's the Internet address?

**Mr O'Toole:** I will read the Internet address last because I want you to listen to this.

The next comment I have is that I've heard repeatedly that somehow this doesn't address the individual needs of the child. I've read to you sections in the bill that allow the orders. These guidelines, the pay scales have been developed by the federal Liberal government. Everybody knows. If it's not fair, they are as much responsible for that as we are. Also, there are provisions within our legislation so that the judge can re-examine, in a litigious way, the fairness of the order and the fee schedule.

**Mr Parker:** To provide flexibility.

**Mr O'Toole:** Flexibility. For those who would like to contact the Internet site and get this information at first hand, it's [www.gov.on.ca/atg/english](http://www.gov.on.ca/atg/english) and that's on HTML, HTML being the server, for any of those who use an Internet site. I have one. That's a very good way to look at all of the legislation. This government has a complete Web site — it's on [ontla](http://ontla) — and that Web site has every piece of legislation, or at least the language for the public to read of what's coming and what it is and what are the implications for them. All of the ministries have a location on the site and you can just sign in and get a look at what's actually happening. There is a lot happening today.

This important piece of legislation is more housekeeping than anything: simplifying, streamlining and allowing the people of Ontario to have predictable outcomes on unhealthy marriage situations. I have no further comments to make at this time.

I would ask that anyone who has any questions on this legislation or the changes to the child support guideline framework call 1-800-980-4962.

*Applause.*

**The Acting Speaker:** Comments and questions?

**Ms Castrilli:** I'm sure it's because the hour is late that the member for Durham East has indulged himself in this way. Let me first of all say that I agree with some things he has said, and perhaps he'd like to listen to me so he can see where the agreement is. We agree that you were right in following the federal leadership, and it's so nice to hear you say that once in a while. But seriously, I also agree with you that parents should pay. That really is what we've been trying to say here. We don't disagree that parents should pay and that the parent who has the funds ought to make sure they are contributed to his children.

Do you have the guts to enforce the legislation you're going to put into place? That's really the question. Will you enforce this legislation like you've enforced some of the others? Women and children are still suffering at the hands of legislation that you've passed that you've not had the ability to enforce, or perhaps the will.

I just want to say a couple more things. The first comment the member for Durham East made was that this was such a tiny bill. I think that's irrelevant, quite frankly. The size of a bill has no bearing on the importance of the matter that is there. I would point out to you that the Charter of Rights and Freedoms in this country is a very tiny document indeed.

The other point I'd make is that it's all well and good for you to give out Internet numbers. Remember that single mothers and children on welfare can't afford cable, do not have the Internet, and the information that you have just so arrogantly given out is of total irrelevance to people who are in need.

**Mrs Boyd:** The member for Durham East obviously was really reaching in order to fill out a little bit of time here and get himself on the record. I'm glad he's supportive of the bill, but I must say that the overzealous ap-

plause of his colleagues must indicate a very special regard for him, given the quality of his speech.

I would say that he is right about the efforts the government did make when they announced this bill to try and make sure there were places that people could receive information. The member for Downsview, however, makes a very good point when she says that those who are having the kind of stress and difficulty making ends meet that many custodial parents have in looking after their children very often don't have the same ability to access the kind of standard sources of information we might have.

It would be probably very wise for a government that's able to indulge in the kind of million-dollar PR exercise the Minister of Education has embarked upon to really look at some way of making this information more readily available in communities. It's one thing to have it available in courthouses, but that assumes that people have already gone to courthouses to see if there is some remedy. It's something else to make sure it's available within communities — libraries, that sort of thing — that counsellors dealing with this provide that information and that the law society is providing that information through lawyers.

**Mr Parker:** My colleague from Durham East was at great pains to point out to the House all of the various means that are available to people to find out about this legislation and to learn what their rights are and to learn what steps they might take. There are so many ways available that even he wasn't able to touch on all of them in the course of his remarks, and I expect that some people who wanted to copy down some of the information may not have been able to in the time available. So I'd like to just relay some of the means that are available and to repeat some of the information that was given.

2120

The phone number for information on this legislation is 1-800-980-4962, and the Web site address is <http://www.gov.on.ca/atg/english/maghome.html>. You can also visit your local family court office. Many of them have officers in place to give advice on this legislation and to guide people through its application and through its implications. The goal there most of all, of course, is to assist people in resolving matters without the need of applying to court. I know the level of anxiety that it sometimes raises with people to think of going to court to bring in a variation application. The hope is that most people will be able to pursue this course and bring about whatever variation is indicated without the need of going to court. The officers are there to assist in that process.

There's also the lawyer referral service in this province. For those outside Toronto, the number is 1-800-268-8326. In Toronto, it's 947-3330. I invite anyone to visit their MPP.

*Applause.*

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** I am intrigued by the amount of applause that I am receiving from the government benches at this time. I want to point out that the government members seem to be extremely satisfied with what's happening even though if you check with your

constituency assistants, what you will find is the largest number of problems brought to our attention now are problems related to the family support office.

The first mistake that was made was closing the regional offices. That was done not to be more efficient, as members of the government would contend; that was done simply to save money. Sometimes there are measures that are taken to save money that are to be applauded and are reasonable; this is not one. This is one that has caused more hardship for people genuinely in need, and that is why it was not something reasonable.

I find it interesting that they give an Internet number or a computer number or a Web site as well as a 1-800 number. The reason I say that is that the assumption is that everyone owns a computer. A lot of people who are of modest income do not have computers. For instance, a lot of people watching tonight may not know they can no longer get the Hansard of this House, the transcript of this House in bound paper such as this. They can only get it by means of their computer. That is of course to deny people of modest means the opportunity to have access to what is happening in this House, and that speaks volumes of this government and its policies.

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker:** Order. I wanted to give you a little lecture because I've heard a couple of choruses. I want to compliment the member for St Catharines that you proceeded in spite of it, but I won't tolerate it any more. I would like to have your attention on the member speaking. If you can't give him your attention, then I wish you'd leave.

The Speaker recognizes the member for Durham East for two minutes.

**Mr O'Toole:** I want to acknowledge the many supportive words from the member for Downsview, the member for London Centre, the member for York East, who received an outstanding ovation, and the member for St Catharines, who is still barking on the same old thing. He can find hardly anything positive to say about this.

I want to address one issue and that's the issue of accessibility. I believe Ms Castrilli brought that up, I think Mrs Boyd picked it up and I think as well that Mr Bradley picked it up. I did not like the gender bias I heard that said it was only single mothers. That shows an innate insensitivity. It's "single parent" that is politically correct. That's the first thing I take great exception to.

The second thing I'd have you know is that in my riding of Durham East there are two sites where you can use the Internet at the local library free of charge. You have to be creative today. We aren't some rich individuals. In fact, I would like to thank the Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, Ms Mushinski, for coming to my riding. She was there two weeks ago, and she's coming this Saturday to open a new library where they'll probably be a new Internet. Public libraries are free. That pretty well sums up my time — I've got 20 seconds left — but I think the accessibility issue is important.

The member for Durham Centre is the one who really wired this one. He said "predictability." What was hap-

pening is that there were inconsistent orders or decisions being made in the courts. This very unfair outcome for some families I believe has been rectified for all of us to be happy with that.

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker:** Order. It seems you could get spring fever in September.

Further debate.

**Mr Gerretsen:** Mr Speaker, there's so much to say about this topic and so little time to say it in, because I notice there's only five minutes left on the clock. I certainly want to take my full 20 minutes and I hope that you will, at the appropriate time, adjourn the debate and the next time that this bill gets called you'll give me the opportunity to start the debate at that point in time.

It's very interesting that we've heard an awful lot about the Internet numbers and toll-free numbers, etc. What the members of the government simply do not understand is that there are an awful lot of people suffering as a result of the problems that the family support plan has had in this province. I state once again, as I stated earlier today, that the most telling thing that I have heard about that in the House here is when the Attorney General, about three or four months ago, thought he was doing a good thing within his department because about 50% of the telephone calls of those people who really needed help, who needed the money that should have been available for them under the family support plan, were actually being returned.

It is a shameful indictment on this government, on this department that obviously this is not a high priority with this government. For anybody to suggest that if you return 50% of your phone calls, that's somehow a good indication of running an efficient operation, they are totally wrong. As a matter of fact, for a government that prides itself on carrying out the business of government in a businesslike fashion, if they were really in business and they returned only 50% of their calls or were able to deal with only 50% of their problems, they would be out of business overnight. That probably says it more than anything else.

Of course the other thing I think is very interesting is that all one has to do is look at the public estimates. These are your figures, the amount of money that has been spent on children's services. You see that year after year since you've been in government the amount of money that's being expended is less and less. I refer you specifically — and the minister is here, and I'm very glad that she is here,

because maybe she can address some of these issues at the appropriate time — for example, to page 85. When we look at the actual amount of money that has been spent on regular child care, it is down some \$4 million between 1995 and 1997. That's \$4 million, and there are more children to look after in this province.

**Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services):** We're spending more than you did.

**Mr Gerretsen:** Of course you're spending more than we did. That was 10 years ago, Madam Minister. By the way, she's out of her seat and maybe she should be told that if she's going to heckle, she should at least have the decency to sit in her own seat.

Let's take a look at some of these other figures. In children's services there was a decrease. Just give me a half a moment, Mr Speaker; I know you're anxious to leave tonight, but this is very important. In community support services what's happening? A \$2-million decrease. We've gone from spending \$19.6 million to \$17.6 million. That is an almost 20% decrease in one departmental figure with respect to the adult and children's services program.

For this government to suggest that children are a priority when the actual funding that has been expended in that area has lessened during the two years they've been in power is totally and completely incorrect and inaccurate. As has been acknowledged by a number of government members here tonight, the family support plan service was in a total mess when they took over — at least that's what they're saying. Quite frankly, before I got elected, I'm not sure whether it was or not, but I'll take their word for it. Why, then, would they close the regional offices and lay off or fire 350 employees within that part of the ministry that dealt specifically with the family support plan? Why would they lay these people off? It clearly indicates this was not a priority with this government.

I can go on, Mr Speaker — I don't know whether you'd like me to — because I've got about five or six other things I want to say.

**Mr Flaherty:** You haven't said anything yet.

**Mr Gerretsen:** You can't have it both ways, my friend. You cannot give a tax cut to your rich friends and say that children are your priority as well. You know it and I know it and the people of Ontario know it as well.

With that, Mr Speaker, I yield the floor to you.

**The Acting Speaker:** It being 9:30, this House stands adjourned until 10 o'clock tomorrow morning.

*The House adjourned at 2132.*

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**Legislative Assembly  
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First Session, 36<sup>th</sup> Parliament

**Assemblée législative  
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Première session, 36<sup>e</sup> législature

**Official Report  
of Debates  
(Hansard)**

**Journal  
des débats  
(Hansard)**

**Monday 15 September 1997**

**Lundi 15 septembre 1997**

Speaker  
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Président  
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

Clerk  
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier  
Claude L. DesRosiers

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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 15 September 1997

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 15 septembre 1997

*The House met at 1333.  
Prayers.*

### INTRODUCTION OF MEMBERS FOR ORIOLE, OTTAWA WEST AND WINDSOR-RIVERSIDE

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** I beg to inform the House that the Clerk has received from the chief election officer and laid upon the table three certificate of by-elections in the electoral districts of Oriole, Ottawa West and Windsor-Riverside.

**Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers):**

(1) "Mr Claude L. DesRosiers

"Clerk of the Legislative Assembly

"Room 104, Legislative Building

"Queen's Park

"Toronto, Ontario

"M7A 1A2

"Dear Mr DesRosiers:

"A writ of election dated the 23rd day of July 1997 was issued by the Honourable Lieutenant Governor of the province of Ontario, and was addressed to Joyce Puddicombe, returning officer for the electoral district of Oriole, for the election of a member to represent the said electoral district of Oriole in the Legislative Assembly of this province in the room of Elinor Caplan, who since her election as representative of the said electoral district of Oriole has resigned her seat. This is to certify that, a poll having been granted and held in Oriole on the 4th day of September 1997, David Caplan has been returned as duly elected as appears by the return of the said writ of election, dated the 12th day of September 1997, which is now lodged of record in my office.

"Warren R. Bailie

"Chief election officer

"Toronto, September 12, 1997."

(2) "Mr Claude L. DesRosiers

"Clerk of the Legislative Assembly

"Room 104, Legislative Building

"Queen's Park

"Toronto, Ontario

"M7A 1A2

"Dear Mr DesRosiers

"A writ of election dated the 23rd day of July 1997 was issued by the Honourable Lieutenant Governor of the province of Ontario, and was addressed to Robert Faulkner, returning officer for the electoral district of Ottawa West, for the election of a member to represent the

said electoral district of Ottawa West in the Legislative Assembly of this province in the room of Robert Chiarelli, who since his election as representative of the said electoral district of Ottawa West has resigned his seat. This is to certify that, a poll having been granted and held in Ottawa West on the 4th day of September 1997, Alex Cullen has been returned as duly elected as appears by the return of the said writ of election, dated the 12th day of September 1997, which is now lodged of record in my office.

"Warren R. Bailie

"Chief election officer

"Toronto, September 12, 1997."

(3) "Mr Claude L. DesRosiers

"Clerk of the Legislative Assembly

"Room 104, Legislative Building

"Queen's Park

"Toronto, Ontario

"M7A 1A2

"Dear Mr DesRosiers:

"A writ of election dated the 23rd of July 1997 was issued by the Honourable Lieutenant Governor of the province of Ontario and was addressed to Amedee Janisse, returning officer for the electoral district of Windsor-Riverside, for the election of a member to represent the said electoral district of Windsor-Riverside in the Legislative Assembly of this province in the room of Dave Cooke, who since his election as representative of the said electoral district of Windsor-Riverside has resigned his seat. This is to certify that, a poll having been granted and held in Windsor-Riverside on the 4th day of September 1997, Wayne Lessard has been returned as duly elected as appears by the return of the said writ of election, dated the 12th day of September 1997, which is now lodged of record in my office.

"Warren R. Bailie

"Chief election officer

"Toronto, September 12, 1997."

**Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition):**

Mr Speaker, I have the honour to present to you and to this House David Caplan, member-elect for the electoral district of Oriole, and Alex Cullen, member-elect for the electoral district of Ottawa West, who have taken the oath and signed the roll and who now claim the right to take their seats.

**The Speaker:** Let the honourable members take their seats.

**Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River):** Mr Speaker, I have the honour to present to you and to this House

Wayne Lessard, member-elect for the electoral district of Windsor-Riverside, who has taken the oath and signed the roll and who now claims the right to take his seat.

**The Speaker:** Let the honourable member take his seat.

### VISITORS

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** I'd like to announce to the House that in the Speaker's gallery today are the delegates attending the 14th American regional assembly of the AIPLF. Welcome.

### MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

#### PROSTATE CANCER

**Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South):** I rise today to speak about a subject that sometimes is difficult for people, and it's in connection with Prostate Cancer Week declared by the Canadian Cancer Society.

Prostate cancer, like all cancers, is insidious, but there's a particular quality to prostate cancer in that for various reasons males affected by it, males in general, are reluctant to discuss it. Sometimes prostate cancer is confused with the sexual function with which it is related in a health sense and it gets in the way of people dealing with this basic health concern.

The reality is it's the largest cancer attack that exists for men in society. It is not yet the largest death rate, but 7,100 men in this province will be afflicted with prostate cancer this year; some 1,550 will die from the disease.

The reluctance of society to deal with it, and of men in particular to acknowledge prostate cancer, means that it goes undetected unnecessarily; that there may not be the same kind of focus in terms of research funding for some other gender-specific cancers; that, for example, the tests which are known to detect this disease are not funded yet by OHIP.

While it's a cause of consternation to people, it is essential in this Prostate Cancer Awareness Week that men in this province talk to their doctors, that they get the simple test that is the prelude to it, and that they also talk to the Minister of Health, to their MPP, to ensure that we are doing everything we can to rid ourselves of this insidious disease.

1340

#### VISITOR

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** I'd like to take this opportunity to introduce in the west gallery the previous member for Oriole. I believe she has a new title now and I'm not certain of the riding. Is it Thornhill? Yes. The previous member for Oriole, Ms Elinor Caplan, welcome.

### UNITED WAY CAMPAIGN

**Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie):** Tomorrow in Sault Ste Marie the United Way kicks off its fall campaign, and what a campaign it's going to be. Led by the able efforts of Carmen Borghese, the executive director for a number of years now, and the president, Don Watson, the United Way of Sault Ste Marie will once again pull together the efforts and energies and goodwill of literally hundreds of volunteers across Sault Ste Marie to make sure that two things happen: first, that the community is made aware of the very valuable work of the many agencies which belong to the United Way and the efforts of the people who work for those agencies on behalf of people in various circumstances in today's society, challenged in ways that they're in need of the assistance of the various wonderful skills presented by the people who belong to those agencies.

They will also be asking people to consider giving donations, consider being generous to those who might otherwise not get services. In these very difficult times, when we're all challenged in many serious ways financially, it is more important than ever before that we dig down deep, particularly those of us who have a job, who are fortunate enough to have a source of income, to consider those who may not have and to give to the United Way at this time of year.

### DIANA, PRINCESS OF WALES

**Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke-Rexdale):** The people of the world were shocked and saddened by the tragic death of Princess Diana. People were drawn to her compassion and her commitment to charitable work. Indeed, the loss for singer Elton John was so great that he felt compelled to compose a new version of Candle in the Wind to commemorate the life of the late Princess Diana. All proceeds from the sale will go to the charities that Princess Diana worked so hard to support.

On Wednesday this week this song will be released in Canada. In the spirit of charity, I call on the Ontario Minister of Finance to follow the British House of Commons' example and forgo the provincial sales tax on this song and support the legacy of Princess Diana. I also call on the federal Minister of Finance to forgo the GST so that all the moneys collected may go to the Princess Diana Memorial Fund.

### MAGNETIC RESONANCE IMAGING

**Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William):** The Minister of Health is resorting to writing letters to the editor in a futile effort to convince people that our health care is not in jeopardy when everyone knows it is.

On Saturday, a letter from the minister appeared in our Thunder Bay daily, the Chronicle-Journal. The letter was, first and foremost, an attack on the Liberal health critic for raising concerns about lack of access to MRI diagnostic services. The letter also talked about the ministry's inten-

tions to increase the number of MRIs and assured the public that people who need an MRI on an emergency basis would have access to this service in a timely manner.

Even if the minister is desperate to get people to listen to his defence, why would he enrage the people of north-western Ontario by sending his letter to Thunder Bay? First of all, the letter describes how many machines are going to Toronto and Burlington and Newmarket. Does he think that will allow timely access to people more than 1,000 miles away? I wonder if he realizes that the closest MRI to Thunder Bay is in Timmins, about 800 kilometres away. Does he think that will be adequate in times of emergency?

But the most offensive thing about this letter is that Thunder Bay has been promised the operating costs of an MRI, but it's a conditional promise. To get it, Thunder Bay has to first of all agree to shut down three hospitals and accept a totally inadequate 60-year-old facility as our only acute care hospital. The proposal for an MRI has been on the minister's desk since long before he sent his commission into our town, but it won't be approved until our community bows to the commission's dictates.

The Minister of Health is using essential MRI services as a weapon to blackmail us with. The next time he gets a letter-writing urge, let him leave us off the list. We can only stand so much.

#### SCHOOL BOARDS

**Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon):** Vous me permettrez de souhaiter une bienvenue tout à fait spéciale à nos délégués spéciaux, membres de l'AIPLF.

The municipal election date is fast approaching and still there are candidates and potential candidates in my riding, that of Lake Nipigon, who are awaiting clarification from the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing on subsection 37(1) of the Municipal Act, as amended by Bill 86.

This legislation eliminates all school board employees — each and every one of them — in Ontario from running and holding office as municipal councillors. The minister has decreed it, indicated to me in writing, that it was not his intention to prohibit anyone from running for any municipal government office. The solicitor of the town of Marathon in my riding has informed the clerk that the legislation has been badly drafted. It's a mess out there. Many municipal clerks across Ontario have been trying to get this matter clarified, to no avail. The town of Geraldton, also in the riding of Lake Nipigon, has written the minister twice. I myself have tried in vain, writing the minister. "We're seeking legal opinions to recognize school boards as local boards, and therefore a school board employee should not be able to hold office." That's what this guy is saying.

The legislation is far too —

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Thank you very much.

#### SEEBURN DIVISION/VENTRA GROUP

**Mrs Julia Munro (Durham-York):** It was a pleasure for me to be on hand in Beaverton as Seeburn Division/Ventra Group Inc was recognized for the third time as General Motors supplier of the year for 1996. Seeburn Division is the world's leading designer and manufacturer of parts for the passenger car and truck industries in North America, South America, Europe and Japan. Seeburn Division is one of only 13 Ontario firms to receive this coveted award this year, and the company was among the select few chosen from a General Motors supplier base of more than 30,000 companies in 26 countries.

This unique award demonstrates this company has found better ways to set up an organization to meet customer needs, to tackle financial challenges — in short, to make a business more effective and efficient. Sometimes this has meant using new knowledge or technologies, but often it's a matter of using existing knowledge with extra insight.

My sincere congratulations to the management and employees of Seeburn Division/Ventra Group Inc and continued success in the future.

#### EMERGENCY SERVICES

**Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich):** I am hoping today that before we get into question period, we will have a moment for a statement by the Minister of Health. He is back in town today. I know he is well aware that all our communities are very aware and have read his own report on emergency services in the Windsor area, so today we are calling on the Minister of Health for action. Our community is very concerned, and we are expecting immediate emergency relief. He knows that a problem exists, and it's not good enough to talk only in rhetorical terms; we need to see immediate action.

As late as September 12, we received yet another missive from the Minister of Health talking about how wonderful everything is in Windsor, especially concerning our emergency services. Our emergency workers are calling for help. They are desperate for some kind of support. In fact, we have a number of people in our community, one of them being Dr Joe Renaud, who said that "conditions where patients are lying on the floor in pain are certain to discourage new doctors the area is trying to recruit."

We told them it would squeeze all the flexibility out of the system. You can cut beds, reduce ORs, but if you cut emergency, you're creating an unsafe situation. Let me remind you of the minister's own report, which reads: "Physically, emergency units are hopelessly inadequate, inefficient and unsafe."

1350

#### BY-ELECTION IN WINDSOR-RIVERSIDE

**Mr Wayne Lessard (Windsor-Riverside):** On September 4, the constituents in Windsor-Riverside had an opportunity to send Mike Harris a message about what

they thought of his last two years in government. This government says they like referenda. Well, the voters in Windsor-Riverside voted no to the Mike Harris cuts to health care, they voted no to cuts to education, they voted no to cuts to environmental protection, and they voted no to Bill 136 as well.

Over the last two years in Windsor we've seen longer waits for surgery, we've seen our emergency rooms in a state of crisis, and we've seen user fees for prescription drugs for seniors.

The voters in Windsor-Riverside just didn't say no to Mike Harris and the Conservatives; they said no to the Liberals as well. They knew that another member in Windsor wasn't going to make the least little bit of difference, because one of the very members in this room today said in 1995 that they were singing from the same song sheet. We have federal members in Ottawa, we have provincial members in Queen's Park, and we can't even keep our local weather station open.

I look forward to following up where Dave Cooke, the former member, has left off, and Fred Burr before him, to fight to preserve health care in Windsor.

I want to acknowledge as well my mother and my wife and my son Brett, who are here with me to share my —

*Applause.*

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** That was your first time up. That's as easy as it's going to get, I guess.

#### SCARBOROUGH CHILDREN'S PROJECTS

**Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Centre):** It's a pleasure to rise in the House today as the member for Scarborough Centre in order to inform the Legislature of two tremendous initiatives for children that are taking place in my riding.

In the first project, the Home Depot has joined forces with Youth Assisting Youth, the local community, Scarborough councillor Paul Mushinski and myself to build a community playground on Trudelle Street. The Home Depot will supply \$20,000 to the project, while the community will work to raise the remaining \$15,000. I am pleased to announce that Eli Lilly Canada of Scarborough has already pledged \$1,000 towards the playground.

This project truly is a partnership between the entire community. In fact, last week the area children were invited to a design day where they were given the opportunity to actually draw pictures and design the playground that will be built. On November 1, 1997, community volunteers will build the playground in a day, and I will be there to help them as well.

The other exciting project is the proposal to build a children's safety village in Scarborough Centre. Like the playground, the safety village will be built in a partnership between the community and the private sector, with not a single tax dollar being used.

Several of the members in this House are probably aware of safety villages in their areas. However, the Scarborough Children's Safety Village will be the first indoor safety village in all of Ontario.

I would urge everyone who is interested in donating money or time to one or both of these worthy projects to contact my office.

#### MOTIONS

##### HOUSE SITTINGS

**Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Government House Leader):** I move that, pursuant to standing order 9(c), the House shall meet from 6:30 pm to 9:30 pm on Monday, September 15, 1997, for the purpose of considering government business.

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? All those in favour, please say "aye." All those opposed, please say "nay." In my opinion, the ayes have it. I declare the motion carried.

#### STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

##### ONTARIO HYDRO

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Minister of Environment and Energy.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Let's let him start before we heckle.

**Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Environment and Energy):** The safe, reliable and efficient operation of Ontario Hydro's nuclear facilities is a top concern for the Ontario government. I know it is also a priority for everyone in this Legislature.

As my colleagues are aware, serious assertions were made about these operations in the recent independent integrated performance assessment report, although the nuclear regulator here in Canada, the Atomic Energy Control Board of Canada, has stated that Hydro's reactors do not constitute an immediate safety risk. Hydro has since released a nuclear recovery plan for bringing its reactors up to superior industry standards.

I believe, and I know the government and opposition members alike share this view, that an urgent review of the Hydro plan by provincial public policymakers is necessary to ensure that the utility is kept on the right track. We must protect the best interests of both the ratepayers and the taxpayers in Ontario.

Today, in recognition of these common concerns, the Legislature will be forming the select committee on Ontario Hydro nuclear affairs. We propose that the committee will be chaired by the member for High Park-Swansea, Mr Shea, and vice-chaired by the member for Wilson Heights, Mr Kwinter. Its mandate will be to scrutinize Ontario Hydro's nuclear recovery plan and its economic and environmental implications for Ontario.

I would like to thank the opposition critics and the House leaders for their cooperation in this matter. I think they are to be congratulated for recognizing that the prob-

lems that have occurred at Ontario Hydro transcend several governments, and dealing with these problems transcends partisan politics.

The committee will be empowered to call upon witnesses and any documentation that they need for examination. It will scrutinize the independent integrated performance assessment report and the findings of the Atomic Energy Control Board of Canada report that I requested last month.

It is our intention that this select committee will return with an interim finding by October 3, with its final report to be submitted by December 1.

I believe the committee's work will be important in assuring the people of this province that their interests are being served. I look forward to working with the members as we examine Hydro's future nuclear directions.

**Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew North):** On behalf of my Liberal colleagues, I want to respond to the announcement the Minister of Energy made a moment ago. We have agreed that it is timely for a select committee of the Legislature to look at the current operations of Ontario Hydro. I believe, and I have said on a number of occasions over the last few weeks, that my preference is for a parliamentary commission as opposed to an outside inquiry, simply because I think it is appropriate and timely for the Legislature to once again try to discharge its responsibilities in this respect. We have an oversight responsibility and I think it is appropriate that we pursue this through the select committee route.

This is serious business, and it is timely. I want to say publicly what I said to the minister in recent days. If this parliamentary commission is to do its proper work, it must from the Liberal point of view undertake two aspects of inquiry. Firstly, the committee must ascertain what has gone wrong at the nuclear power reactors and what a responsible recovery plan might be. In that connection, it is absolutely critical that an independent evaluation be undertaken by the committee of the so-called recovery plan that Hydro management announced four weeks ago. If there is not an independent evaluation of Mr Farlinger's multibillion-dollar recovery plan, we will have failed the public in our duty.

Secondly, it is absolutely critical that the minister, Mr Sterling, at a very early point produce the government's white paper on electricity reform, because no member of the Legislature, no citizen of Ontario can properly evaluate a recovery plan for the nuclear power division unless and until the government does what it said it would do over a year ago, namely, produce a government white paper on electricity reform.

1400

I want to be absolutely clear about those two essentials from our point of view. If neither of those points is met, then we will have failed. I have better things to do with my time and the public's money than engage in some kind of scam, something that might appear to provide only legislative cover, so Mr Farlinger, the acting president of Ontario Hydro, can go on and do what he has already decided to do.

I know for a matter of fact there are people in the highest levels of the Ontario government who are very concerned about what the Hydro board announced and decided a few weeks ago. I've been engaging the ministers of energy and finance in this assembly in recent days on that very point. I just want to underscore one point again. The Hydro board received the integrated performance review, the IIPA, in late July and within days the board decided on and announced publicly a \$5.5-billion to \$8-billion recovery plan. Within days they decided on a multibillion-dollar recovery plan.

I have some very grave suspicions about what has gone on here. I'm not going to engage in a conspiracy theory, sceptical though I might be, but I will insist that there be independent evaluation, by people who know what they're talking about and looking for, of Mr Farlinger's plan. It is in that connection that I draw to the minister's attention once again my concern about any kind of legitimate legislative oversight that is announced on 15 September and is supposed to make an interim finding in 17 days' time. Whom do we suppose we are fooling? Surely the minister is right when he says we've all gotten our hands dirty as politicians in this Hydro business, but there cannot be any honourable member who honestly believes that this committee, which I believe in, can do its work in 17 days.

**Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt):** I am pleased to respond to the Minister of Energy concerning the creation of a select committee for Hydro. As the minister knows, we in this caucus wanted an independent commission of inquiry to look at Hydro, because we do not think that a committee dominated, even though they be sterling people all, by Tory backbenchers is necessarily going to give us the kind of independent analysis that we would like to see. Even though the minister says in his statement that the problems at Ontario Hydro transcend several governments and dealing with these problems transcends partisan politics, one would think that if it transcends partisan politics, perhaps we could have had an independent commission that didn't need to be dominated by Tory backbenchers. It seems logical to me.

Mr Speaker, I don't want you to rule that the minister is in contempt of the Legislature; however, for him to stand in his place — and the written statement is slightly different from his oral statement. The written statement says, "The Legislature has agreed to form the select committee on...Hydro," and his oral statement said, "The Legislature will be forming the select committee on Ontario Hydro." I think there's a certain presumptiveness there that really doesn't sit well on the Minister of Energy. However, I do not want you to rule that he's in contempt of the Legislature, Mr Speaker. I think that would not be completely appropriate.

I am going to be serving on the committee and much of what the member for Renfrew North said I support. We're not in this for some kind of dog-and-pony show as we travel about certain locations in the province. We really do want to get to the bottom of the problems at Ontario Hydro and in particular its nuclear division. Those of us who love Ontario and have a sense of its history know the

critical role that Ontario Hydro, the electrification of Ontario, played in the economic development of this province. It was a very serious role they played, and we want that role to continue.

It was through public power delivered at cost that this province became as prosperous as it has been. We don't want that to change. We know that this government has an agenda for privatization that we think is sheer lunacy and we will be resisting that. However, we know there are problems in the nuclear division of Ontario Hydro and we want to get to the bottom of that.

I would reiterate what the member for Renfrew North said as well. The government has a white paper basically, I gather, on future competition in the generation and distribution of hydro power in Ontario. We need to see that. We don't want to operate in a vacuum as we deliberate on the problems of Ontario Hydro and the direction that Ontario Hydro must go. If we're to deal with the recovery plan in a serious way, we don't want to be spinning our wheels while the government is fully intending to go in a completely different direction, perhaps.

It's terribly important that we get a look at that white paper. If the Minister of Energy doesn't have that completed, perhaps he could tell the folks in the Premier's office to get their hands off it and let the Minister of Energy get on with delivering that white paper to the committee. It's very important that we see that so we're not operating, as I say, in a vacuum.

The costs of the recovery plan need to be analysed independently and questioned very seriously. They went from \$5 billion to \$6.5 billion to \$8.8 billion in costs and we're suspicious. This government and Ontario Hydro are the same people who, when they brought Darlington into the grid, said, "It's going to cost \$4 billion but it's complete." Now it's \$14 billion, give or take a billion. We're not satisfied that Ontario Hydro necessarily has the people who will give us the independent objective, nor the people on that side, the Tories, who after all were the ones who launched Ontario into the nuclear age and said that these would be the costs. We know now that those costs were wildly underestimated.

I intend to serve on this committee and I want to take the work seriously, but I also think the time lines are bordering on the ludicrous to say, without the committee even having met yet and no staff hired, that we're going to have an interim report in less than three weeks. Nevertheless, we'll try. I don't think any of us are there to thwart the work of the committee, and I must say I look forward to serving on it and working with other members of the committee.

## ORAL QUESTIONS

### TEACHERS' COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

**Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition):** My first question is for the Minister of Education and

Training. Last Thursday I had the opportunity to visit a high school in St Thomas, Central Elgin high, and I had the opportunity to speak with the entire student body at an assembly. I had the time to think about it this weekend, and one of the things that struck me was that these kids have a lot on their plate these days. They've got school, they've got part-time jobs, they're worried about how they're going to get to college or university, they're worried about the fact that you've increased their tuition fees by 30% and the fact that you've cut student aid. Today they're worried about whether they're even going to be able to finish their school year, and so are their parents. They're worried about a strike.

Minister, you clearly created the crisis with your cuts to classrooms and with the further cuts that you have planned. What are you doing to head off a confrontation with teachers?

**Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training):** I think it's rather obvious that we're working very hard to make sure there is not a confrontation with teachers in this province. We have had some consultations over the last few weeks that I believe were fruitful.

We've listened to what teachers had to say to us. We've had a chance to talk with people about what the bargaining climate should be for teachers in Ontario as we collectively try to build that better system, as we collectively try to build a system of education that's a match for the abilities of our students and where Ontario students won't be in the middle of the pack in terms of their performance on pan-Canadian and international tests. We don't think that is giving our students what they need for the future, so we're working together to build a better system.

1410

**Mr McGuinty:** Minister, you're fiddling. Today when parents drop off their students at school, they're very concerned about whether there's going to be a strike this week, and if not this week, then next week or the week after. Teachers today in their staff rooms are wondering whether they're going to be on strike. They wonder whether they've got a minister who has a genuine interest in bringing about substantive improvement to education in Ontario or whether your only concern is to take another \$1 billion out of classrooms.

Teachers are telling us they've got a billion reasons to believe there's going to be a strike, and that's the billion further dollars you're going to be removing from Ontario classrooms. Minister, will you now decide to head off a strike by scaling back your plans to suck yet another \$1 billion out of Ontario classrooms?

**Hon Mr Snobelen:** I think the Leader of the Opposition is aware of our plan to have the province be responsible for the funding of education and our commitment to make sure that funding is at a level that will assure every single student in the province a high quality of education. We've said that several times.

I went down a couple of weeks ago and asked people who represent teachers, the teacher unions in Ontario, to chill out with the rhetoric, to come in and talk with us to

see if we couldn't build that better system together. Based on what the Leader of the Opposition has said just now in this Legislature, I would ask him to do the same thing, to chill out the rhetoric, to cut the strike talk and to help us build that better system of education. I think that's the responsible thing to do. I think it's the responsible thing for a politician in Ontario to do.

**Mr McGuinty:** The minister has one heck of a lot of nerve. He tells me to chill out on the rhetoric. He's the one who invented the phrase "creating a crisis." He's the one who brought this to a head. He's the one who has single-handedly set back government-teacher relations in this province at least 50 years. That will be his legacy to education in Ontario. That will ride as the primary accomplishment of John Snobelen, Minister of Education.

You have taken \$533 million out of our classrooms and now you're telling us you're going to take out another \$1 billion, and then you say: "Teachers, come on and sit down and let's chat. We'll talk about it. But by the way, we're taking out another \$1 billion whether you like it or not."

We've lost junior kindergarten, we've got fewer special-ed programs, you've gutted adult education, and you're not even listening to some of the messages being delivered by your own Education Improvement Commission, who are telling you you can't take any more money out of education.

Minister, when are you going to listen to what you're being told? When are you going to stop trying to fund your tax cut on the backs of Ontario students, so our teachers and our students will remain in the classroom, where they belong?

**Hon Mr Snobelen:** First, what we don't listen to is some of the statements just made by the Leader of the Opposition, which are frankly just plain wrong. I would have thought the Leader of the Opposition would have known the facts on this file better than he obviously does.

I can say this: We have been working together with people in education over the last two years to correct two problems that have persisted in Ontario, one of those being that we haven't had a funding system that matched the needs of our students, and we are taking that on and changing it; the other being that we will not allow our students to continue to have mediocre performance on pan-Canadian and international tests. Your government allowed that to persist; their government allowed that to persist. We will not. We don't think it's fair for the students of Ontario.

The Leader of the Opposition said back on May 7, 1992, speaking about teachers' strikes, "It's my feeling that although the legislation may have addressed the rights of teachers and boards, it really failed to adequately address the rights of students." I'm glad to see that the Leader of the Opposition feels that way. I hope he still does, and I hope he hasn't taken that back.

## CHILDREN'S SERVICES

**Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition):** My question is for the Minister of Finance. I saw you on television on the weekend and took great comfort from some of the words you uttered on TV. You said: "I think that any society, at the end of the day, judges itself by how we treat the underprivileged and less fortunate in society. I think it's government's role to try to do that." Heart-warming words indeed, and I want to tell you that this comes as particularly good news for Ontario kids who see themselves as some of the least fortunate in Ontario.

Government is about making choices, Minister, tough choices, and I'm sure, having made that statement, you would agree that helping today's kids is more important than a tax cut. So I'm just going to ask you, what funding cuts that you've made to children's services in Ontario will you now restore to help Ontario kids instead of proceeding with the tax cut?

**Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance):** To the Leader of the Opposition, I also said, and I'm sure he would want to take into account everything that was said on Focus Ontario, that the best thing you can do for any individual in society is provide them with the dignity and meaningful wellbeing of a job. I think for the overwhelming majority of Ontarians, that is exactly what they want. The member will know that there are today 219,000 fewer people receiving social assistance in Ontario than there were in June 1995. That is because these people now have the dignity of a job and are able to contribute to society, and they're paying taxes.

**Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands):** How do you know that?

**Hon Mr Eves:** How do I know that? Because revenues went up \$2.2 billion last year from all forms of taxation.

**Mr McGuinty:** Minister, your words lend no comfort whatsoever to the three-year-olds in Ontario who are going to be beaten, punched or kicked and who will come under no supervision because 250 case workers have been laid off at Ontario's children's aid societies and they will not be visited. You cut \$17 million out of children's aid society funding, and what that means is there's less protection available for Ontario's children. It's as simple as that.

Again, Minister, now that you recognize that in Ontario the needs of our children are a priority, will you restore the cuts that you've made to children's services in Ontario?

**Hon Mr Eves:** We are spending more money on child welfare this year in Ontario than ever before, as I'm sure the leader of the official opposition has heard from the Comsoc minister on previous occasions.

I, as a former Comsoc minister, can tell you that the Minister of Community and Social Services today is indeed a very committed, caring individual who is looking out for the best interests of women and children in this province, and she's doing an excellent job of doing that. Does that mean that every single person in Ontario is being taken care of? Absolutely not. But are we trying to

do what is best for the overwhelming majority of Ontarians, especially the unfortunate in society? The answer is, absolutely.

**Mr McGuinty:** Let's just for purposes of the record understand what it is you've done to Ontario kids thus far — and it's early days yet. You've cut \$17 million from children's aid societies and they have responded by letting go 250 case workers. You have cut children's welfare payments by 22%. I defy you, Minister — today is the 15th day of the month — to go into any single mother's household, look in her cupboards today, look in her fridge today and find out how much food is there — and you tell me that you're helping out Ontario's children by cutting their welfare payments.

You've also cut special education and junior kindergarten. You are robbing them of the opportunity to realize their academic potential, pure and simple. That's what you're doing when you do that. You've got priorities, you set them, and I say that when you make cuts to children's services, when you make cuts to education, your priorities are wrong.

Minister, again, once more, if you truly believe that children are a priority in Ontario, will you now restore the funding cuts that you have made to children's services right across the board?

1420

**Hon Mr Eves:** The leader of the official opposition talks about the \$15 million coming out of children's services. He forgets to mention the \$26 million that went back in through contingency funding from the Minister of Community and Social Services. He didn't mention that. He doesn't talk about the \$10-million program for healthy babies and healthy children. He doesn't talk about —

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Order.

**Hon Mr Eves:** To the former leader of the Liberal Party, it's quite obvious she wouldn't know anything about contingency funds from the way her party ran this province into the ground with a \$100-billion debt. It's quite obvious to see you've never run anything.

The leader of the official opposition didn't mention the following amount of moneys we're spending on children as well: a \$10-million fund for healthy babies and healthy children; a \$20-million investment in preschool speech and language services for children; a \$4.6-million ongoing investment in Better Beginnings, Better Futures; a \$10-million grant to Invest in Kids Foundation.

The government is also committed to increasing our spending on child care by some \$200 million over the next five years. The Ministry of Community and Social Services will be spending up to \$600 million on child care alone, the highest ever in the province of Ontario's history, on a per capita basis, 50% more than in Alberta —

**The Speaker:** Minister of Finance, thank you very much. Come to order. New question, leader of the third party.

## HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

**Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River):** I have a question to the Minister of Health. Health care planners, health care workers, the public and just about everyone in the province has repeatedly told you that you cannot restructure our health care system effectively without good planning and reinvestment.

Even your own commission has told you that you cannot close hospitals and cut hospital services until the alternative community services are up and running. But you haven't listened. Instead, you continue to force your destructive health care cuts on to communities.

In Thunder Bay, you've got a severe bed shortage because of your cuts. In London, the psychiatric hospitals don't know how they will implement your plan. In Windsor, the situation is worst of all. It's backwards.

Why are you forcing hospital restructuring on Windsor without the financial resources to implement the changes and while your own commission is still studying Windsor? Will you tell the people of Windsor that?

**Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health):** The honourable member is correct in that the Health Services Restructuring Commission has visited Windsor and not issued a report on Windsor. We're awaiting that report.

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Supplementary.

**Mr Wayne Lessard (Windsor-Riverside):** Minister, you just don't seem to get it. This is what's happening in Windsor. We've already got a restructuring plan. It was endorsed by your ministry. Financial commitments have been made. You called it an example for others to follow. But, in spite of finding these savings, Windsor hospitals still suffered a 13% cutback in funding.

Last April, emergency services were consolidated and the emergency room at Western Hospital was closed prior to renovations being completed at Hotel-Dieu Grace. Now there's a crisis in emergency services. The Win-Win report called for a \$72-million investment in health care services in Windsor, but it hasn't materialized because your commission is investigating. This is crazy. Will you live up to the commitment to Windsor and solve this current crisis?

**Hon Mr Wilson:** May I begin by welcoming the honourable member back to this Legislature and saying that I'm fully apprised of the Windsor situation. It was the government, the DHC and the hospitals together that asked Dr Eugene Dagnone and Nurse Heather McGillis to go down to Windsor over the last few months and to make sure not only that we were providing resources but that all the planning was in place to make sure there's a smooth transition of consolidation of services in that city. I think you'll find that's reaffirmed in the press conference they are having tomorrow morning, that everyone is working together. A report with 10 recommendations was just released in the past few weeks and only one of those recommendations pertains to the Ministry of Health. The other nine are problems that the hospitals themselves, with the DHC and the ministry in concert, have to work through together.

**Mr Lessard:** You can't have it both ways. You use Windsor as an example of how restructuring should proceed and you seem to be doing everything to sabotage the process. Now you want to regionalize the district health council and totally change its membership so there won't be anybody who can oversee this transition. The new district health council will have to take on restructuring that is already under way in Windsor and also planning in Lambton and Kent county. It's perhaps going to set back plans by a year.

You have a report that tells you that emergency services in Windsor are in crisis and you refuse to follow through on the capital commitment. You refuse to listen to the district health council in Windsor and Essex county and you refuse to listen to your own commission.

Will you stop this commission and invest the necessary money and let this restructuring process proceed?

**Hon Mr Wilson:** I would remind the honourable member not to use the word "crisis." His own hospitals aren't using the word "crisis." There were 59 spaces capacity in the old emergency rooms; in the new emergency rooms there are 59 spaces. People are working very, very hard to transition the programs down there.

With respect to the DHC, we are working with them. We work with them all the time, and I think they will confirm that.

We have set aside and I have announced \$72 million for capital improvements to the hospitals in Windsor. However, the hospitals themselves agreed in February, and I have the minutes of the meeting saying, "I guess the money won't be released until the Health Services Restructuring Commission finishes its report."

At least most people understand that the money is sitting there and it's ready to flow. It can't flow appropriately until we have the proper plans in place to make sure patients won't fall between the cracks. If there is anything I can do in the meantime between now and the commission's final report, I want to do that. We're working with the hospitals to see what we can do in the meantime, but I think there is a great understanding, and indeed many people in Windsor, including the DHC, want the Health Services Restructuring Commission to —

**The Speaker:** Thank you. New question.

**Mr Hampton:** To the Minister of Health again, I don't think people in Windsor got anything from you today that will make them feel better.

#### HOSPITAL FINANCING

**Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River):** My second question is about what is happening in northern Ontario. On Friday it was reported in the Sault Ste Marie Star that there is a critical anaesthetist shortage in the Sault. This will result in elective surgeries being cancelled at a 50% to 60% rate. It will mean women in labour will go without epidurals. At the same time, Janice Willet of the OMA says there is a critical problem for general surgery and this will eventually affect emergency services. The reason, we are told, is due to your cutbacks.

Minister, while you talk about studying the health care situation in northern Ontario, we go from one service crisis to another. In spite of your announcements and pronouncements, surgery is being cancelled, hospitals are forced to lay off nurses, and they cannot deal with the emergency situations. Will you reinstate the hospital funding so people can do their jobs and look after people's health?

1430

**Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health):** We didn't take away any funding with respect to the anaesthetists. Three anaesthetists have left the community. This has happened many times. It happened under your watch as the government and it happened under the Liberals. It happens from time to time.

We will be ensuring that they're, again, part of the underserved area program, the specialist retention program to try and attract anaesthetists. I should tell the honourable members that 30 anaesthetists graduated in July 1997. They're going through their PFC exams right now and some of them will be available for hiring in the province and we're going to do everything we can to recruit them to Sault Ste Marie.

**Mr Hampton:** This is the same tired answer we've got from this minister for over two years now, and while he gives us those answers the service gets worse.

On Friday the cardiac care coordinator for the northern region stated publicly that they are very concerned because at Sudbury Regional Hospital the average wait for cardiac surgery is now three months long. There is a great deal of concern because your so-called solution to the crisis in cardiac surgery was to plug in some one-time funding. So the wait went from three months to six months, but now it's going back up again. What this means also is that next year, when the one-time funding runs out, the list will go up even more.

Minister, will you commit today to a permanent solution? Will you reinstate hospital funding that you have cut in northern Ontario so that people don't die on your waiting lists?

**Hon Mr Wilson:** Cardiac care was not cut anywhere in the province. It's a protected area, as are mental health, dialysis and a whole range of areas. About 85% of the hospital budgets are protected and not a penny was allowed to be cut. You closed a whole bunch of psychiatric beds and we've had a moratorium on those.

With respect to cardiac care, in addition to no cuts, we added \$2.7 million, which has increased surgeries over the past few months in Sudbury by some 35%. It's a record, and we should be applauding those doctors and nurses who are working so hard. Frankly, they're working overtime.

I've spoken with that doctor. He understands that we're putting as much money forward as possible, that through his good work and that of his colleagues and the nurses, surgeries are up 35%. Unfortunately, the demand is higher than anyone anticipated. We're looking at the situation again; it may require more money.

But I don't want the honourable member to keep going around the province saying we cut cardiac care. That is not what we've done. In fact, we've added \$35 million across the province and surgeries are up everywhere. At least you admitted that our money cut the waiting list in half, which is far more than you did during your five years in office.

**The Speaker:** Final supplementary.

**Mr. Marion Boyd (London Centre):** Minister, that simply isn't the case and the statistics show it. They show very clearly that in 1996-97 the waiting list is higher than it has ever been at Sudbury. I'll pass it across to you. That's from the Cardiac Care Network.

You make these claims as though you are doing something that is different than you say it is, and the case is true that we are seeing case after case in northern Ontario where people are not receiving the services they deserve. You throw one lot of one-time money at a situation of cardiac waiting periods in the city of Sudbury and think you've solved the problem, but everybody knows you haven't. Demand is increasing, you're right about that, but you have made no permanent solution. When are you going to come up with a permanent solution to the problem of the long waits in cardiac care, waits that are absolutely unexampled under any other jurisdiction? When are you going to come up with that solution?

**Hon Mr Wilson:** What the honourable member is showing is volume. There are more patients, true, because the population is growing and aging, and that's why we're restructuring the system as quickly as we can, but the waiting time for that larger number of people is shorter than it's ever been in many, many years in the province.

Would you admit the following? Surgeries are up 35%. Would you please tell the surgeons they're doing a great job, and the nurses also, working Saturdays and Sundays to meet that demand? I'm not sure they can work any harder than they are.

Some \$2.7 million has gone in there and, yes, we have asked the Cardiac Care Network, which is in charge of the cardiac surgeries list in this province, to get us a comprehensive plan so that we have a permanent plan in place to deal with these situations. But let's not deny the fact that surgeries are up 35%, that more people than ever are being served in a faster period of time. The population is growing and aging and we all have to be diligent to address the needs of the population, and that's what we're doing.

## RENT REGULATION

**Mr David Caplan (Oriole):** In the absence of the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, my question is for the Deputy Premier. Minister, as you well know, the people of Oriole overwhelmingly sent a message to this government. In my riding, over 20,000 tenants live and contribute to our community of Oriole. As I went door to door, tenants in buildings across the riding told me the same message: that your Bill 96, your so-called Tenant Protection Act, will take away their rights. They know that

if they move they'll be faced with higher and higher rents and that landlords will be able to discriminate against them by virtue of their income.

When will this government start listening to the people you are affecting with your decisions? Will you stand in the House today and agree that the only thing in Bill 96 that represents tenant protection is the title, and will you agree to withdraw this bill before it adversely affects the lives of over 20,000 tenants in Oriole and tenants in the rest of this province?

**Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance):** I welcome the new member for Oriole to the Legislature. He bears a striking resemblance to a former member for Oriole.

**Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition):** You can't have too much of a good thing.

**Hon Mr Eves:** That's probably correct, I say to the leader of the official opposition.

The government, as I'm sure he knows, held extensive public hearings on Bill 96 this summer. Over 130 groups made presentations during the public hearing process —

**Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York):** But you guys didn't listen. I was there.

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Member for Fort York.

**Hon Mr Eves:** He might want to look at some of the amendments that came forward as a result of the public hearing process. For example, property tax decreases will automatically be passed on to tenants. We have proposed an amendment that makes it mandatory for landlords to provide free receipts when requested by —

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Minister, we'll wait for the heckling to finish.

**Hon Mr Eves:** The government, as he knows, has tabled over 70 amendments to Bill 96. I think it proves that we are listening. The whole intent of the bill is to improve maintenance procedures to make landlords more responsible.

He might want to comment on his government's record when it was in power. How is it that rent increases to tenants under the David Peterson government went up 34%?

**Mr Caplan:** Tenants have very little confidence in the words of this minister and in the actions of this government. The government committed, at the beginning of this process, that you would be protecting their interests. You have not. You should be aware of what people are saying across this province. If almost 60% of the people in Oriole rejected your government, this should give you cause to reflect. I know from talking to my colleagues that the message from their constituents is the same: There is no tenant protection in your rent control bill.

I ask you again to reconsider. Withdraw Bill 96 now and protect tenants from escalating rents, from poor standards and discrimination by landlords. Minister, will you do that?

*Applause.*

**The Speaker:** You can't applaud in the gallery, by the way.

**Hon Mr Eves:** I just wondered, Mr Speaker, if you wanted to recognize the former member for Oriole in the gallery.

**The Speaker:** I did.

**Hon Mr Eves:** Commenting on the strength of a by-election victory, I compliment the member on obviously a very well run campaign, but I'm not so sure what that has to do with the issue we're talking about in the Legislature today. I think we still have the same number of seats on this side of the House as we did before the by-election. I'm glad you finally got back to where you started.

I'm surprised that the Liberals have proposed the amendment to remove the cap on guideline increases. I'm not so sure how this would protect tenants in the legislation.

As I said to the member, there are a lot of things in Bill 96 that improve maintenance on behalf of landlords. The whole intent of Bill 96 is to protect tenants while at the same time encouraging people to develop rental stocks so there will be more rental housing in Ontario. That's the whole purpose of the bill.

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#### BENEFITS FOR OLDER WORKERS

**Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre):** My question is to the Minister of Labour. Minister, I would point out to you that we have in the House several former workers from the Stewart Hartshorn plant in Renfrew which closed a number of years ago. These workers and their colleagues are members of the United Steelworkers of America and they've been waiting patiently and desperately for benefits due them under POWA, the program for older worker adjustment.

They understand that it's a complicated program. They understand that it requires negotiations between the federal and provincial governments. They even understand that there have been administrative delays in the past. What they don't understand is why you and your government want to reduce the benefits that are owed them to only about 40% of that full entitlement. Minister, I'd like you to rise in your place today, look those workers in the eye and tell them why you want to cut their benefits to only 40% of what they are rightfully owed.

**Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Labour):** I certainly would be very pleased to respond to the question that has been raised regarding the workers who are owed money by POWA. Unfortunately, the reason for part of the delay in the payout is based on the fact that this program was not handled as expeditiously as it could have been by the former government.

We have now arrived at a point where we have agreed to some very specific sets of terms and conditions for winding down the POWA program. It was agreed with the federal government that workers eligible for POWA would receive up to 50% of the original value of their benefits. Our staff has been meeting with the POWA

recipients and we hope that money, if they have not yet received it, would soon be made available to them.

**Mr Christopherson:** First of all, I would like to say to the minister, you've been in office for two years. It's starting to get a little bit stale that you want to blame everything on what happened before. You've been there two years. You're the one who hasn't resolved this.

I might point out to you that I have a copy of a letter from the federal minister, whom your office has been working with, wherein they say that in April of this year they upped the ante, where they were prepared to put in enough money that the full benefits could be paid out to these workers who find themselves in such dire straits in terms of their lives and their livelihood. All it took was you and your government to say that you'd be in for your full 30% of the share and they'd get 100%. Now you're telling me today it's 50%.

That's not good enough. This is just to pay for your tax cut — a couple of cups of coffee for most people in Ontario. For you to stand there and say you're proud of 50% — unacceptable. The federal government has offered to pay 100%; we just need you to get onside. Minister, you owe it to these workers to stand up and say you will make sure they get all the money —

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Thank you, Minister.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** I am extremely proud of this government's efforts to fix the POWA application logjam. There were over 5,000 people waiting for funding from POWA. Some of these people have been waiting up to four years. Unfortunately, it was not handled well by the NDP government. I will indicate to you that there was an agreement reached between the federal government and the province in December 1996. Unfortunately, prior to the last federal election, the federal Liberal government decided to change the arrangement. It was very convenient.

**Mr Christopherson:** They opted in April and you know it.

**The Speaker:** Order. I caution the member for Hamilton Centre to come to order.

#### INVESTMENT IN ONTARIO

**Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Centre):** My question is for the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism. The importance of foreign investment to Canada has been highlighted once again in a recent study by John McCallum, the chief economist for the Royal Bank of Canada.

Not only does Ontario receive more jobs and more money through foreign investments, but we also benefit from new technologies and innovations. The openings and expansions of many companies within the past year, such as RSL Manufacturing in Scarborough, the Glaxo Wellcome investment of \$120 million in Mississauga, the 3,000 new jobs announced by Sprint Canada and the new ING Direct call centre in North York, are all certainly

great news for the GTA that our government should be very proud of indeed.

But I continue to see news articles that say we need more direct investments and that Canada's share of direct capital is not enough. My constituents in Scarborough Centre want to know that Ontario is doing its job. Can the minister please inform the House what our government has done to attract foreign investment?

**Hon William Saunderson (Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism):** I'm very happy to respond to the question from the member for Scarborough Centre. Our government has been very proactive and very aggressive in establishing Ontario as a first-in-mind concept when it comes to foreign investment. We've improved the business climate in Ontario significantly and we are committed to doing much more.

Last year, as you may know, we launched Market Ontario, which is a very aggressive investment attraction campaign. The object of this campaign is to raise Ontario's profile and build awareness of Ontario's favourable business climate. We want to target markets and we want to target them worldwide.

Since last November, we have launched a major advertising campaign and we have engaged in media relations and initiated direct marketing activities, including investment missions, trade shows and corporate calls, in which I am pleased to say I actively participated.

I was gratified to learn from the Globe and Mail Report on Business last Thursday that one of the groups I met with on behalf of the Ottawa-Carleton —

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Supplementary.

**Mr Newman:** I just want to take the opportunity to commend the minister on the fine job he's been doing and to let him know that his efforts are resulting in more jobs in my riding of Scarborough Centre.

Attracting foreign investment can't simply be looked at as a one-time deal. I'm sure launching Market Ontario was just one of the many initiatives on the part of our government. Can the minister assure my constituents in Scarborough Centre that there is a long-term strategy in place to make Ontario the best place in the world to invest?

**Hon Mr Saunderson:** In regard to the supplementary, I would like to say that I'm happy to announce that MBNA Corp, a large bank in the United States, will be coming to Ontario very shortly and establishing itself in the Ottawa region. This is going to create a lot of jobs, and I'm pleased to say that our ministry and our government worked very closely to make this investment happen. It'll create a lot of jobs and a lot of economic activity.

We have already started with our second wave of advertising in the United States, the United Kingdom, Japan and Germany. We have upcoming direct marketing projects in mind, which will be targeting the investment decision-makers around the world, to put Ontario back on the radar screen. The reason we have to do this is that the previous two governments worked in such a way that they discouraged investment in Ontario. That's why we are doing all we can to promote investment in Ontario.

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## GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

**Mr Alex Cullen (Ottawa West):** In the absence of the Premier, my question is to the Deputy Premier. As you know, the voters in Ottawa West sent Mike Harris a message. They overwhelmingly repudiated the government's program. While many said that dealing with debt and deficit was important, they overwhelmingly said that this government is going too far too fast with its cuts to health care, its cuts to education and the downloading of the costs of provincial services on to property taxpayers.

My question is: Will this government listen to the people? Will you honour your promise not to close hospitals, not to harm classroom spending, and recast your downloading package to ensure that property taxes will at the end of the day be lowered?

**Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance):** I welcome the honourable member to the Legislature of Ontario and congratulate him on his by-election victory. To answer his question directly, first of all, we are increasing health care spending in this province. We are spending this year \$18.5 billion on health care in Ontario. I realize that his former leader promised only to spend \$17 billion a year on health care, but we're spending \$1.5 billion more than that. I trust he will find that to be acceptable.

With respect to classroom education, we're trying to put the dollars where they're supposed to be spent, benefiting students in the classroom as opposed to administrative expenditures.

With respect to the Who Does What exercise in municipalities, he might want to take the advice of his predecessor, who said that the downloading responsibilities can be absorbed, said that the region of Ottawa's estimate of \$82 million in new costs is inflated and vowed not to raise taxes. I don't see where your predecessor thinks there's a problem.

**Mr Cullen:** I'm pleased that the member opposite is engaged in campaigning for my predecessor. I hope he has sent his cheque. The facts are that during the last election the Premier promised not to close hospitals, promised not to harm classroom spending, and most recently pinkie swore that provincial downloading to municipalities would be revenue-neutral. However, the voters in Ottawa West are not five-year-olds and they want to know what tangible action this government will take, what the course taken will be, how this government will show that it clearly heard the message that has come through the people of Ottawa West and elsewhere through these by-elections.

**Hon Mr Eves:** The government listens to the people of Ontario every day. That is why with respect to the Who Does What exercise we have set aside over \$1 billion in transitional funding to help municipalities through this two- or three-year period of time.

If the honourable member is so concerned about expenditures, why would he, when he was a regional councillor,

vote for a 23% pay increase for himself, which increase would —

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** New question, third party.

### SMALL BUSINESS

**Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie):** My question is for the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism. Last week, Minister, your finance minister stood in this House and painted a rosy picture of the economy, told everybody, "Be happy, don't worry."

This weekend we picked up the newspaper and saw 1,600 out of work at Olive Garden/Red Lobster as they go under.

**Interjection:** That's funny.

**Mr Martin:** I have a letter here that I got last week from the Ontario Restaurant Association. Laugh at them if you like.

"I have enclosed for your information a copy" —

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Can the member for Scarborough East come to order, please.

**Mr Martin:** Small business is going down the drain, 1,600 people lose their jobs and all these folks across the way can do is laugh. I have a letter here from the Ontario Restaurant Association. They say: "I have enclosed for your information a copy of the Ontario Restaurant Association's latest industry economic snapshot." Did you get this, Minister? "As you can see from the analysis, Ontario's restaurant and foodservice industry has hit an all-time high in bankruptcies and is lagging well behind the rest of Canada in sales and receipts."

What is it, Minister, boom or bust? We're confused over here. Small business entrepreneurs out there are concerned and afraid. Workers are losing their jobs. What are we to believe: what your government spins out as the truth or what is turning up on the streets of our communities for small business and workers every weekend?

**Hon William Saunderson (Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism):** I'm very pleased to respond to the question of the member for Sault Ste Marie. As he is, I am very concerned and all our members are concerned when people lose their jobs. The restaurant industry is the quintessential small business in this province, in fact in this country. The member certainly knows that this government has been trying to help small business ever since its election. It is our priority to help business, particularly small business.

Let me just say to him a few of the things we have been doing to help small business, the very industry he's talking about. We will have reduced the personal income tax by over 30% over the next three years. We have established the red tape commission. We've reformed the Workers' Compensation Act. We've eliminated the employer health tax on the first \$400,000 of payroll, and that means that over 80% of businesses in Ontario will no longer have to pay this.

For him to stand on his —

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

**Mr Martin:** Speaker, he never answers my questions. These people are going bankrupt, Minister. They go on to say:

"The broader implications of these disturbing economic trends will be felt in the area of youth unemployment. Currently, the restaurant and foodservice industry employs over 40% of all youth workers employed in Ontario. The prolonged economic difficulties faced by the restaurant and foodservice industry have significantly limited the industry's ability to hire new young workers."

In my own community we did a study about a year and a half ago that said your government is going to lay off 1,600 workers, and that will then affect the private sector. This weekend we found out that Red Lobster is closing — 46 workers in the private sector out on the street.

Will you admit today that your government's lack of a real economic plan is hurting small business and hurting workers? Will you admit that your own lack of leadership is beginning to show? Today it's the hospitality industry. What will it be tomorrow?

**Hon Mr Saunderson:** The member should know that in the month of August there were 33,000 jobs created in this province. Since March of this year 158,000 jobs have been created. Since we were elected in June 1995, almost 250,000 net new jobs have been created.

Seeing that the member did his share of quoting, just let me share with you a letter that I received from Judith Andrew, who is the head of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business: "I think the proof is already there. You are seeing real, positive economic numbers here in the province. If these types of policies weren't working, you wouldn't have that."

Mr Paul Oliver, who is president of the Ontario Restaurant Association, in the Globe and Mail recently said, "Certainly for industries such as the food industry, anything that puts money back in consumers' pockets is a positive initiative."

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### SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

**Mr Gary L. Leadston (Kitchener-Wilmot):** My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services. I've heard from a great number of my constituents in Waterloo region regarding the welfare reforms in Ontario. Many of the calls are very supportive and very pleased with what we are doing. How does Waterloo region area compare with the progress that has been made around Ontario?

**Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services):** I'm very pleased to report that, as we've mentioned in this House previously, we've seen unprecedented drops in the number of people on welfare in Ontario; across the province 218,000 individuals who no longer have to rely on welfare. I'm very pleased that in the Kitchener-Waterloo area we have seen a similar drop and we have 3,000 fewer cases of people trapped on welfare. That's a 14% drop and that's unprecedented.

We know that is not only because of the strengthening economy, more jobs — we've heard from my colleague about the job growth in this province — but also because of our welfare reforms like Ontario Works, our work-for-welfare program. Forty-two communities are involved now, it's up and running, steadily expanding across the province. I'm very pleased that Waterloo was one of the initial sites that volunteered to participate.

**Mr Leadston:** How are the taxpayers of Waterloo region going to benefit from this reduction in welfare payments?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** One of the good things about this, if you will, is that everyone benefits from these changes and the results that we have had. Not only do those individuals who no longer have to rely on welfare benefit because most of them are now in paid jobs where they want to be, but also the taxpayers benefit.

In the Waterloo region the taxpayers have saved \$5.6 million. That is a significant saving for them and I know that the municipal leaders will be able to use those savings to, for example, help hold down property taxes; or, if you were to look at what those savings could buy the taxpayers in that region, it would translate out to 70 additional police officers, just to give you some understanding of the scope of those savings. That's good news, and we're very proud of the work that we've been able to do in this regard.

### WATER QUALITY

**Mr Frank Miclash (Kenora):** My question is to the Minister of Environment. The Minister of Environment will know that, through much correspondence and conversations with the town of Sioux Lookout, myself, my office, the mayor of Sioux Lookout, they are in trouble in terms of their water supply. He will also know that a boiled water advisory was put on to the residents for their drinking water by the northwestern health unit. It's been in effect for months and it will be in effect until they are able to get rid of the contaminants in their drinking water.

You will also know that the town of Sioux Lookout has an application in to bring safe drinking water to their citizens. Can you update us on the status of that application?

**Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Environment and Energy):** The member did speak to me with regard to the program, the program being the provincial water protection fund, which has some \$200 million to deal with problems like the member has outlined with regard to Sioux Lookout.

The ministry is now going through several applications by municipalities across this province which might have problems with regard to their drinking water quality and we will be prioritizing those with regard to which ones are in most urgent need.

The whole program was based first on environmental and health concerns and therefore I'm very hopeful that Sioux Lookout will be one of the successful applicants to this program.

**Mr Miclash:** I'm asking you today about that program you announced at AMO, which you did with much fanfare. I'm asking you today on behalf of the residents of Sioux Lookout when they can expect to be on your priority list or where they are on that priority list, when they can expect the funds to flow so they can get safe drinking water, something that most communities throughout Ontario assume they have. I'm asking you today when the people of Sioux Lookout will hear from you and your ministry and can turn on their taps and actually know they have safe drinking water. The question is, when?

**Hon Mr Sterling:** To be fair to all the municipalities, it is necessary to have a small amount of time pass between the announcement and the ability of those municipalities to put forward their plans with regard to this particular item. The budget did call for the expenditure of \$40 million this fiscal year with regard to this program, so I expect the decisions with regard to the funding to be made in the very near future.

### PUBLIC HEALTH

**Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South):** My question is to the Minister of Health. You would know that last week I asked a series of questions in this House with regard to the northern regional genetics program. Your ministry is offloading that particular program, along with others from the health units in northern Ontario, on to local municipalities in your municipal downloading exercise. You would also know that municipalities in the north have already indicated that they're not going to be able to find the fiscal room to keep that program alive for northerners. It will mean that southern municipalities will have access to that particular program because it's paid through hospital and university budgets, but in the north we will lose the service.

Last week to the Premier, in a follow-up on another question, he seemed to indicate that your ministry was prepared to make sure that the provincial funding was in place for the northern regional genetics program. Could you please confirm that, Minister?

**Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health):** I've said all along and the Premier confirmed on September 10 that the ministry has been working with local health officials on ways to ensure that the program continues. We've indicated we'll continue the funding for the program.

**Mr Bisson:** This is the bizarre part, Minister. When I asked the question last week in the House, the Premier seemed to say the same thing as you, that you as the provincial government will ensure that this program stays in place. He left the impression that the province was going to pay for the funding. But when I talked to the Premier afterwards in the House, he looked back at me and said: "Of course I don't mean the province. I mean the municipality." Who am I to believe?

Your parliamentary assistant talked to us on Thursday after a late show question and seemed to indicate that your ministry was prepared to fix this problem. You understand the problem. Northern municipalities and patients under-

stand the problem. If you don't step in, we'll lose that service in northern Ontario and the south will have the service because it is paid through hospital and university budgets. Minister, will you use provincial dollars to ensure that this program stays in place for northern residents, yes or no?

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** I just ask the House to come to order so we can hear the answer. There are a lot of meetings taking place.

**Hon Mr Wilson:** The answer is yes.

#### NORTHERN ONTARIO HERITAGE FUND

**Mr Bert Johnson (Perth):** My question is for the Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

The government has focused on ensuring that all the people of Ontario are getting the services they deserve at a price they can afford. A major step in accomplishing this goal is securing the accountability of government. Members of this House are aware that in the past there have been concerns about the northern heritage fund, which is allocated to protect the future of those who live in northern Ontario. Questions have centred on whether the government is truly investing funds in the north, and if so, whether this money goes beyond the ordinary budgets of various ministries.

Can the minister please confirm for the House that funds are being allocated to help those in northern Ontario, that the funds are in fact being used in Ontario and explain what the money is being used for.

**Hon Chris Hodgson (Minister of Natural Resources, Northern Development and Mines):** I want to thank the member for his question. I'm pleased to inform the House and the members of his riding that the money is being spent since last October, when the Premier, the Treasurer and I, with a board comprised of northerners who volunteer their efforts at \$1 a year, announced the new terms of reference and new focus for the northern Ontario heritage fund. We reinstated the \$60 million plus interest that the previous government had taken from the fund back into the fund. We have invested \$22 million in projects, which has leveraged another \$33 million in northern Ontario to promote an economic base which all people can build upon.

In the past the fund was focused upon grants to individuals or grants to businesses. We have changed that focus and tried to build an infrastructure that improves not only the economic climate but the infrastructure base, the tourism base and the strategic partnerships across northern Ontario that individuals in business can then build upon, create their own opportunities and improve the economy in northern Ontario.

1510

#### PETITIONS

##### VEHICLE REGISTRATION FEES

**Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William):** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the new Mike Harris northern vehicle registration tax does not recognize the uniqueness of the north; and

"Whereas Mike Harris should know that gas prices are higher in northern Ontario; and

"Whereas the new Mike Harris northern vehicle registration tax is blatantly unfair to the north; and

"Whereas we have no voice for the north fighting for northerners around the cabinet table;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to revoke the new tax imposed on the north and convince the Tory government to understand that indeed northern Ontario residents do not want the new Mike Harris vehicle registration tax."

This is signed by a number of my constituents, and I have affixed my signature in agreement with their views.

##### CANCER PREVENTION

**Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale):** I have more petitions from people about preventive cancer care. It reads:

"Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario,

"Whereas cancer claims in excess of 20,000 lives annually in Ontario alone; and

"Whereas cancer treatment costs Ontario taxpayers in excess of \$1 billion annually; and

"Whereas the best way to fight cancer or any disease is through preventive measures; and

"Whereas the Ontario Task Force on the Primary Prevention of Cancer has advised the government to set realistic and realizable targets for phasing out the release of environmental toxins; and

"Whereas the Legislative Assembly on April 18, 1996, passed a resolution to that effect with support from all three parties;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"The Premier and the Minister of Health should immediately implement the April 18 resolution and strike a working committee to begin the task of setting realistic targets for the phase-out of persistent bio-accumulative environmental toxins."

I affix my signature to this petition because I fully support it.

##### SECURITY OFFICER

**Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Centre):** I have a petition signed by hundreds of residents from 1030 and

1040 Gordonridge Place. They are again quite concerned that their security guard has been moved from Gordonridge to another area in the Metropolitan Toronto Housing Authority. The petition reads as follow:

"To the Legislature of Ontario:

"We, the tenants of Gordonridge Place, have taken this petition in hopes of having our security officer, Jamie Dunham, placed back in our Gordonridge project."

It says, "Keep up the good work."

I have signed this petition, because I think it's worthwhile, and I'm behind the people at Gordonridge in their quest to have their security officer back.

### HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

**Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William):** I have a petition to the Legislature of Ontario.

"Whereas the undersigned residents living in the city of Thunder Bay in northwestern Ontario are in need of a new regional acute care hospital situated in the city of Thunder Bay to provide the said residents with quality health care services in a modern and up-to-date acute care hospital; and

"Whereas the partial renovation and restructuring of the existing Port Arthur General Hospital, a 65-year-old outdated and antiquated hospital building, proposed by the health services review commission and the Minister of Health for the province of Ontario, will not be suitable, adequate or proper to provide such quality health care services to the said residents; and

"Whereas the undersigned residents endorse and support the Thunder Bay Regional Hospital and the trustees of the hospital board in their vision of a new centrally located hospital to serve the northwestern Ontario region;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario to reverse the decision and direction of the health services review commission and the Minister of Health to have all acute care services for the city of Thunder Bay and northwestern Ontario region delivered from the renovated and restructured site of Port Arthur General Hospital and to endorse and approve capital funding to build a new, centrally located acute care hospital in the city of Thunder Bay."

This has been signed by another 246 residents in my community, and I again sign my signature in agreement.

### LONG-TERM CARE

**Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre):** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario from members of Locals 183 and 633 of the Service Employees International Union in Belleville.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Over 80,000 men and women live in nursing homes and homes for the aged in Ontario. Many of these residents have made enormous contributions to our society over the years and yet today, due to inadequate funding, our older citizens, our parents, relatives and friends, are being warehoused. Caregivers in these facilities are run

off their feet trying to do the jobs they were hired to do, but day after day they go home feeling stressed and guilty because they are not able to provide the kind of emotional and physical care they feel the residents deserve.

"As more and more hospitals are being closed, nursing homes and homes for the aged are being asked to care for sicker, older and more mentally fragile residents without the corresponding increase in resources needed to provide good care.

"Therefore we, the undersigned residents of Ontario, demand that the Legislature of Ontario stop the underfunding of nursing homes and homes for the aged; immediately establish and adequately fund a minimum standard of 2.25 hours of nursing and personal care for each resident, each day, in homes for the aged and nursing homes; ensure that long-term care remain the responsibility of the province — any downloading to the municipalities will result in uneven standards across the province; ensure that long-term care remain in public hands and that it not be sold to private, for-profit nursing homes; and ensure dignity, rights and respect for all residents and workers in nursing homes and homes for the aged."

I add my name to theirs.

### SECURITY OFFICER

**Mr John O'Toole (Durham East):** It is my pleasure to present a petition on behalf of the member for Scarborough Centre. There's been a virtual outpouring of petitions in support of the member for Scarborough Centre, but he left this on the desk so I'm going to present it.

"To the Legislature of Ontario:

"We, the tenants of Gordonridge Place, have taken this petition in hopes of having our security officer, Jamie Dunham, placed back in our Gordonridge project.

"Please keep up the good work."

There were so many petitions that I think the member, Mr Newman, just inadvertently dropped it.

### VEHICLE REGISTRATION FEES

**Mr Frank Miclash (Kenora):** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly that reads:

"Whereas the new Mike Harris northern vehicle registration tax does not recognize the uniqueness of the north; and

"Whereas Mike Harris should know that gas prices are higher in northern Ontario; and

"Whereas the new Mike Harris northern vehicle registration tax is blatantly unfair to the north; and

"Whereas we have no voice for the north fighting for northerners around the cabinet table;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to revoke the new tax imposed on the north and to convince the Tory government to understand that indeed northern Ontario residents do not want the new Mike Harris vehicle registration tax."

I have affixed my name to that petition as well.

## IPPERWASH PROVINCIAL PARK

**Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma):** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

"Whereas many questions concerning the events preceding, during and after the fatal shooting of Anthony Dudley George on September 6, 1995, at Ipperwash Provincial Park, where over 200 armed officers were sent to control 25 unarmed men and women, have not been answered;

"Whereas the officers involved in the beating of Bernard George were not held responsible for their actions; and

"Whereas the Ontario Provincial Police refused to co-operate with the Special Investigations Unit in recording details of that night;

"Whereas the influence and communications of Lambton MPP Marcel Beaubien with the government have been verified through transcripts presented in the Legislature; and

"Whereas the trust of the portfolio of native affairs held by Attorney General Charles Harnick is compromised by his continued refusal for a full public inquiry into the events at Ipperwash; and

"Whereas the promised return of Camp Ipperwash to the Stony Point Nation by the federal Ministry of Defence and the serious negotiations of land claims by both the provincial and federal governments could have avoided a conflict;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that a full public inquiry be held into the events surrounding the fatal shooting of Dudley George on September 6, 1995, to eliminate all misconceptions held by and about the government, the OPP and the Stony Point people."

This petition is signed by 42 residents of Ontario and I affix my name thereto.

PUBLIC SERVICE AND  
LABOUR RELATIONS REFORM

**Mr E.J. Douglas Rollins (Quinte):** To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, I have a petition dealing with Bill 136, with some 200 names on it. I present it today. Thank you.

1520

## HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

**Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands):** I have another petition that deals with the horrible state of health care in Ontario. This petition goes to the root of that —

**Hon Noble Villeneuve (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs):** Oh, come on. Talk to your federal cousins.

**Mr Gerretsen:** — as the Minister of Agriculture obviously knows, because he —

**The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson):** Can you either read the petition or explain it, one or the other?

**Mr Gerretsen:** The petition is addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and it states that:

"Whereas over half the people in Ontario are women;

"Only 5% of the money spent on medical research goes to research in women's health;

"Women have special medical needs since their bodies are not the same as men's;

"Women's College is the only hospital in Ontario with a primary mandate giving priority to research and treatment dedicated to women's health needs;

"The World Health Organization has named Women's College Hospital as the sole collaborating centre for women's health for both North and South America;

"Without Women's College Hospital, the women of Ontario and of the world will lose a health resource that will not be duplicated elsewhere;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to ensure the continuance, independence, women-centred focus and accessible downtown location of the one hospital most crucial to the future of women's health."

I have affixed my signature to the same.

## COURT DECISION

**Mr Bob Wood (London South):** I have a petition signed by 151 people. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the courts have ruled that women have the lawful right to go topless in public; and

"Whereas the Liberal government of Canada has the power to change the Criminal Code to reinstate such public nudity as an offence;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the government of Ontario to pass a bill empowering municipalities to enact bylaws governing dress code and to continue to urge the government of Canada to pass legislation to reinstate such partial nudity as an offence."

## GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** My petition reads as follows:

"Whereas the Minister of Education intends on taking more than \$1 billion out of Ontario's education system at a time when there's an increasing consensus on the importance of supporting our schools and classrooms; and

"Whereas per pupil funding in the province of Ontario now ranks below other jurisdictions, such as Georgia, Kentucky, Missouri and Nebraska; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government has now embarked on an advertising campaign which will cost the taxpayers of Ontario over \$1 million; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris commercial doesn't constitute an important public announcement and instead is clearly an abuse of public funds, because they are self-serving political messages which are designed to influence public opinion; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government could cancel the advertising campaign and use the \$1 million which belongs to the taxpayers of Ontario for the purchase of 40,000 textbooks;

"We, the undersigned, call on the Mike Harris government to cancel their blatantly partisan, self-serving political advertising campaign and redirect the taxpayers' \$1 million to classroom funding."

I affix my signature to this petition, as I'm in full agreement with its contents.

#### ROCK MUSIC GROUP

**Mr John R. Baird (Nepean):** I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the rock band Marilyn Manson was permitted to play a concert at the Ottawa Congress Centre on Friday, August 1, 1997; and

"Whereas Marilyn Manson's wilful promotion of hatred, violence, immorality and obscenity has been linked to teen suicides and adolescent crimes across North America; and

"Whereas by allowing Marilyn Manson to perform, the Ottawa Congress Centre, a crown agency with a public mandate, helps to legitimize the band and its unethical messages; and

"Whereas the Ontario Court (General Division) has ruled that Marilyn Manson's music does not meet the definitions of 'obscenity' or 'hate literature' in the Criminal Code;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to call on the Liberal government of Canada to amend the Criminal Code in order to ensure that Marilyn Manson and other people directing messages of hate and derision towards vulnerable children and youth are not permitted to perform in Canada and to ensure that messages which offend the moral and ethical sensibilities of Ontarians are not given a voice at venues financed by the taxpayers of Ontario, including the Ottawa Congress Centre."

I am pleased to affix my own signature to that too.

#### PUBLIC SERVICE AND LABOUR RELATIONS REFORM

**Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William):** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Harris government's Bill 136 will effectively suspend all labour relations rights for municipal, health and school board employees affected by provincially forced amalgamations; and

"Whereas the Harris government's Bill 136 will hurt average workers in every community across Ontario including nurses, teachers, firemen and police officers; and

"Whereas the Harris government's bill will decrease the quality of health care as well as the quality of education delivered in Ontario; and

"Whereas the Harris government's Bill 136 was designed to provide the government with sweeping powers to

override long-standing labour negotiation rights for workers including the right to negotiate, the right to strike, the right to seek binding arbitration and the right to choose a bargaining unit;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, support our MPP Lyn McLeod in her opposition to this legislation and join her in calling upon the Harris government to repeal Bill 136, which creates a climate of confrontation in Ontario."

This petition is signed by a large number of my constituents and I've affixed my own signature in agreement with their concerns.

#### GAMBLING

**Mr Ed Doyle (Wentworth East):** I have a petition that is signed by approximately 80 people in a church group in my riding, in which they have expressed some concern about the spread of gambling in the province of Ontario, and I present this petition.

#### ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

**Mr Frank Miclash (Kenora):** I have a petition that reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas on July 15, 1996, the government of Ontario forced seniors with incomes over \$16,018 to pay an annual \$100 deductible on prescription drugs;

"Whereas this user fee imposed significant financial hardships on vulnerable seniors;

"Whereas on April 1, 1997, the government of Ontario unfairly and knowingly forced Ontario seniors to pay that \$100 deductible again;

"Whereas the time between July 15, 1996, and April 1, 1997, is only eight and a half months and not one year;

"Whereas the Ontario government has wrongly taken an additional \$30 million out of the pockets of seniors for prescription drugs;

"Whereas Ontario seniors feel cheated by the government of Ontario and this \$30 million ripoff shows a tremendous disrespect for Ontario seniors;

"Therefore be it resolved that the government of Ontario credit Ontario seniors for the three and a half months overpayment they were forced to pay on prescription drugs by making the effective date for the 1998 \$100 deductible July 15, 1998, instead of April 1, 1998."

I have affixed my name to this petition as well.

#### ORDERS OF THE DAY

##### SELECT COMMITTEE ON ONTARIO HYDRO NUCLEAR AFFAIRS

**Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Environment and Energy):** Mr Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to move a motion with regard to the establishment of a select

committee on Ontario Hydro nuclear affairs, without notice.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson):** Is there unanimous consent? It is agreed.

**Hon Mr Sterling:** I move that a select committee on Ontario Hydro nuclear affairs be appointed to consider and report on the Nuclear Performance Advisory Group's independent integrated performance assessment from the perspective of the performance and reliability of Ontario's nuclear facilities, and in particular:

To examine the Atomic Energy Control Board report on the findings of the independent integrated performance assessment and to make recommendations on safety principles relating to training and implementation plans;

To examine the costs and environmental impacts of the nuclear recovery strategy, including Ontario Hydro's financial justification of its nuclear recovery strategy; the economics and viability of alternative supply options; and environmental impacts of specific components of recovery and means to address and mitigate these impacts;

To examine any other matters that the committee considers relevant to the above terms of reference;

That the committee present an interim report to the House by October 3, 1997, and a final report by December 1, 1997, or on a date to be determined by the committee, provided that if the House is not sitting, the committee have authority to release its report by depositing copies with the Clerk of the assembly and, upon resumption of the sittings of the House, the Chair of the committee shall bring such reports before the House in accordance with the standing orders;

That the committee have the authority to meet at the call of the Chair;

That the committee have full power and authority to employ counsel and such other personnel as may be deemed advisable and to call for persons, papers and things and to examine witnesses under oath; and

That the said committee be composed of the following members:

Mr Shea, Chair, Mr Kwinter, Vice-Chair, Mrs Johns, Mr Galt, Mr O'Toole, Mrs Fisher, Mr Conway and Mr Laughren.

**The Acting Speaker:** Mr Sterling moves that a select committee on Ontario Hydro nuclear affairs — dispense? Dispense.

1530

**Hon Mr Sterling:** Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, for your efficiency.

At the outset, I would like to indicate I'm splitting my time with the member for Northumberland, Mr Galt.

This is a different occasion for the Legislature of Ontario in present times. This is, I think, the first time for a long time that a select committee of the Legislature has been set up. When I was first elected some time ago — that was in 1977, Mr Speaker, for young fellows like you — there were several select committees sitting at that point in time and it was quite a common parliamentary practice. I can remember select committees on such won-

derful subjects as tile drainage, chaired by our friend Lorne Henderson from Lambton county.

**Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma):** I could never figure out why they went to Arizona.

**Hon Noble Villeneuve (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs):** No, they went to Florida. It's very wet down there.

**Hon Mr Sterling:** I'm sorry to raise that, because it does bring back so many pleasant memories for the other members opposite who were here at the same time, trying to figure out why that committee travelled to Florida at that point in time.

There was also a select committee on company law, chaired by Mr Breithaupt of the Kitchener-Waterloo area, which also went far afield at times.

However, one of the former select committees which was of real significance to this debate was the committee on Ontario Hydro back in the 1970s. At that time the committee tried to grapple with the long-standing problem of members of this Ontario Legislature gaining control of Ontario Hydro and its day-to-day activities. That committee considered, I believe, four areas of concern and actually operated in a fairly efficient manner and came forward with some fairly good reports. The problem was the implementation of those reports and the implementation of laws and rules and procedures since that time to the present day which have in essence failed to bring Ontario Hydro to heel by the government.

There is of course the necessity of allowing Ontario Hydro to carry on its business on a day-to-day basis, because it's hardly within the capability of any member of the Legislature or in fact any minister to keep his or her thumb on those kinds of activities. Ontario Hydro is a very large corporation. Perhaps a lot of people don't realize the enormity of the institution. Ontario Hydro is the largest capital corporation in Canada. In other words, when you put together all of their assets, let me say, at book value, they would be the largest of all in terms of all of the capital they have. It would be somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$35 billion to \$40 billion. There is no other corporation in Canada, private, public or otherwise, which has that kind of investment. So we're dealing with a very significant financial giant when we're talking about Ontario Hydro.

As you know, I have been the Minister of Environment and Energy for a little over a year now and immediately upon my being sworn in as the Minister of Energy, I was meeting with Mr Farlinger, then chair of the corporation and now not only the chair but also the president of the corporation on an interim basis. Mr Farlinger stated to me his concerns with regard to the nuclear program of Ontario Hydro. Even at that point there were some signals coming from the Atomic Energy Control Board, which is the regulatory arm of Ontario Hydro, that there were problems in our hydro-nuclear program.

Perhaps I should explain that even a little more. While Ontario Hydro is involved in the running of generators, the transmission of power across the province and the

distribution of power, that is, the wires going out to the houses and the businesses in various parts of our province, the actual regulating of the nuclear plants falls under federal government jurisdiction, and their arm or agency is the Atomic Energy Control Board, which is chaired by Dr Bishop. They are our safeguard that Ontario Hydro is following the necessary rules and regulations to ensure that these plants are being run in a safe and efficient manner.

The Atomic Energy Control Board's involvement is in licensing these plants for a period of a year. Commonly in Ontario they have licensed the various plants for a period of two years.

The Atomic Energy Control Board, as well as sitting as an agency body in the city of Ottawa, also has people on site all of the time. When we usually think about an agency or a board which is overseeing the activities of a corporation or something like that, we don't envisage that they actually have people on the ground all of the time. The Atomic Energy Control Board has approximately 10 employees full-time at the Bruce nuclear facility, 10 people at the Pickering nuclear facility and about five at the Darlington nuclear facility.

In December 1996, the licence to operate the Pickering A plant was coming to an end, the two-year period was coming to an end, and the Atomic Energy Control Board was considering that licence again. Ontario Hydro was looking for the usual two-year licence but was told by the Atomic Energy Control that they were only going to get a six-month licence and that certain improvements had to be made with regard to the procedures that they undertook. That required, then, another hearing and decision in June of this year and that licence was given for a nine-month period. So for this last year or so, eight months in particular, the public has become acutely aware of the fact that there was something different going on with regard to the safety regulations in our plants.

Most immediately, in August of this year, we received a report called the —

**Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew North):** IIPA.

**Hon Mr Sterling:** The IIPA, the independent integrated performance assessment report.

**Mr Joseph Cordiano (Lawrence):** That's the association Norm was involved in.

**Hon Mr Sterling:** Yes, the IIPA. That resulted from the fact that shortly after my talk after initially being sworn in as the Minister of Energy, the chairman of Hydro, Mr Farlinger, was so concerned with regard to the nuclear program of Ontario Hydro that he decided, over and above his responsibilities to the Atomic Energy Control Board in satisfying their wants and needs in terms of licensing, he would hire independently some nuclear experts in running these plants.

Unfortunately, because Ontario Hydro really is the nuclear power industry of Canada and it was really not possible within Canada to seek that expertise, Mr Farlinger went to the United States and hired Carl Andognini and a team of six other experts to prepare a report on the status of Ontario Hydro's nuclear program

and match that against the experience that Mr Andognini and the other group of experts had with those plants in the United States of America. In other words, they were trying to benchmark what our performance was against what the performance was in the United States for other nuclear facilities.

**1540**

In mid-August Mr Andognini prepared his report, which was significant in size, significant in depth and was very extensive in terms of the operations of Ontario Hydro nuclear plants. Mr Andognini not only talked about the Pickering plant, which had had problems with regard to its licensing, but also talked about the eight reactors at Bruce: the one reactor which has been permanently closed down, the three reactors in Bruce A, the four reactors in Bruce B, and the heavy water plant which is in Bruce as well. He also commented on the four reactors in Darlington as well as the eight reactors at Pickering.

It's on the record now that the production of that report caused a significant amount of concern in the public's mind. I was privy to the report a couple of days prior to its release and immediately sent it to Dr Bishop at the Atomic Energy Control Board to ask her what her comments or opinions were with regard to this significant document. The documents in sheer thickness relate to about 12 inches. I don't know how many centimetres that might be, but you'd probably know that. It would be significant in size.

I know that the committee, as do I, would have difficulty in trying to synthesize this report and come forward with conclusions as to the validity of the criticisms Mr Andognini might have made with regard to this report, but I have asked Dr Bishop for her response. Her response is related to in the motion: that the committee will be considering Dr Bishop's response to Mr Andognini's report and that it will be part of the deliberations of the committee.

The primary focus of the report is to ensure that the safety of the reactors and the program will continue and will improve. I guess one of the difficult parts here for the public is to say on the one hand that you have this report which is quite critical, and on the other hand that the Atomic Energy Control Board has said to me that there is no undue risk associated with the operation of these reactors at this time. The problem relates to running reactors safely and efficiently; in other words, running them safely and having them operate 85% to 90% of the time. What has happened particularly over the last four, five or six years is that the reactors are not running nearly long enough to make them economically viable, or as economically viable as we, the taxpayers and the shareholders of Ontario that we are, would like them to be. They can't run them 80%, 85% to 90% of the time like they were running them in the early 1980s at that efficient ratio. They can't run them safely that often, therefore the reactors are shut down for various and different reasons.

That is the real scope of the other part of the documentation that was unveiled in the middle of August: the recovery plan of Ontario Hydro. So first we had in the middle of August Carl Andognini's report, the IIPA re-

port, the safety report which I have referred to Dr Bishop of the AECB to get her comments on.

The second part of the puzzle is the recovery plan Ontario Hydro has put forward as the method of dealing with that and having these reactors operate safely at 80%, 85%, 90% of the time. You always have to close the reactors down for maintenance; you have to change things. Not only the reactors have to be closed down, but the turbines that the heat drives, the pumps. All those kinds of things have to have regular maintenance. Some of them have to be changed. They are very complicated engineering and there is a lot of machinery which has to be tended to. The trick in the nuclear industry is to have these operating at a very efficient rate.

If I could make the difference in terms of what it means for each percentage point of efficiency, as you raise your efficiency from let's say 50% to 55%, where they are operating at this present time, each percentage point by which you can increase the efficiency means about \$100 million more to Ontario Hydro in terms of its profitability picture. If you can increase the efficiency of these generators by 30%, you have increased the revenue potential of Ontario Hydro by some \$3 billion. Because of the present financial situation of a very large debt load that Ontario Hydro is carrying at this time, improving the efficiencies of these nuclear generators is extremely important to us.

In the middle of August we had the safety report and the recovery plan presented to us. I immediately was in talking with the Premier and Mr Farlinger and indicated to him that as Minister of Energy I thought it was necessary for us to have a public process to deal with both of these reports, (1) to assure the public that these generators were in fact operating in a safe manner, and (2) to assure the public and to bring forward the proper questions to Ontario Hydro that the recovery plan was the best possible plan to bring greater efficiency, better safety and preserve the taxpayers' interest as shareholders of this very large corporation.

That is why we have now put forward in our motion the setting up of the select committee. I believe that the members who have been chosen have a great deal of interest in this particular matter. The chairman, Mr Shea, has before been a member of Toronto Hydro in this area and has had experience in chairing committees. I have every confidence that he will drive this committee forward. Ms Fisher, the member for Bruce, has a tremendous interest in the outcome of the deliberations of this committee. She has near her home the Bruce plant, which I believe has over 4,000 workers in that area. She has spoken to me on numerous occasions of her concern over any shutdown that would occur in that area because of the employment not only directly, but the indirect effects of it on her community up in that area. Mr Speaker, as you know, representing smaller communities, the decrease in the number of jobs can be very significant to those areas.

1550

There are also other offshoots which are to be taken into account. When you shut down reactors, or in this case

if the heavy water plant is shut down, the energy park up at the Bruce nuclear facility is in trouble because they get a byproduct of steam from the heavy water plant, and therefore the government must try to grapple with the downsides with regard to doing that.

I believe, however, that this committee has an opportunity which no other committee or select committee of the Legislature has heretofore had in the province of Ontario. The other document which will be coming forward very shortly — and I'm making every effort and I want to assure my critics opposite — I see the member for Nickel Belt listening attentively to my remarks. I'm very cognizant of their interest in getting this document on the table so the deliberations of the committee can be more meaningful and they can therefore deal with the issues, being assured of the government's policy with regard to electricity, electricity competition and Ontario Hydro in the future.

Before the other members rise and talk about the dates, I think it's important to notice, from the actual wording of the motion, that the October 3 date and the December 1 date are there but it is well within the mandate of the committee to postpone those particular dates. I have discussed with the opposition the reason for those particular dates, one being that Ontario Hydro has a board meeting every so often. I think it's important to try to keep Ontario Hydro updated as to the direction the committee might be going in at a particular point in time so that commitments, decisions are not made willy-nilly and in contravention of where the committee might be going in the end.

However, I've also told the members of the opposition, and I've made this quite public, that there are certain decisions which must be made by Ontario Hydro, particularly with regard to safety concerns. If Ontario Hydro decides for safety reasons that certain actions must be taken, I don't believe it would be in the committee's interests or the government's interests or the taxpayers' interests that those decisions be stalled. It may be seen that certain decisions must be made on the economic front as well. However, it's my hope that the committee will be able to work quickly enough and produce enough of a direction to the chairman of Hydro that their work and their recommendations will be taken, and taken seriously, by Ontario Hydro in making their decisions in the future.

As I mentioned before, we have a select committee now that will be charged with a very important task, a task which a lot of people in the province do not clearly understand, nor perhaps did I even clearly understand when I was a member and my attentions were not focused on this very significant corporation, that not only relates to our concern over safety and a corporation which is run by the province of Ontario, but it really goes to our ability to compete in the future with other states, with other jurisdictions, to get jobs for Ontario.

Our overall purpose on this committee should be, number one, safety; number two, the economic issues that spin out of any kind of recovery plan or recommendations we might have for Ontario Hydro, because those economics will determine what electricity rates are going to be in the

long term and whether or not we are going to be competitive in Ottawa or we're going to be competitive in Stratford, or wherever in the province, to attract those industries to come here and not go to New York state or Quebec or BC, or whatever, because there is cheaper power in those jurisdictions. It's in our combined interests that we find the best possible economic solution.

Last but not least, as the Minister of Environment, I'm particularly concerned with regard to any of the downsides to the recovery plan to our environment. The Ministry of Environment has been making perhaps the largest moves in terms of trying to deal with air quality that any government has for a long period of time. We've clearly focused our ministry on air quality and on improving our air quality.

Within the last number of weeks I have announced perhaps the largest grass-roots program since the blue box program to engage the public in actually having to take action or to be involved in an environmental program that this province has ever seen, and that was the announcement of the vehicle emissions testing program, which will eventually test 4.7 million cars in the province. That means we will be asking the people of Ontario, like they've never been asked before, to deal with air quality in a very direct manner, and that is to ask them to have the most efficient automobiles they can so that what's coming out of the tailpipe is not bad for our smog in the summer and the rest of the year. We have concentrated on air quality, and therefore I hope that committee will consider those parts of this which will lead to a deterioration in our air quality.

It's my hope that we can find alternatives in perhaps bringing power into this province, in requiring generators to generate power in a most clean and efficient manner, in rewarding those who produce power cleaner than those who produce power from fossil fuel. Those are the kinds of issues I'm sure the committee would like to talk about and like to deliberate on. I only want to make certain, however, that their answers are practical. There is no sense in talking about wind power replacing nuclear power in this province, because if we all had a windmill on our roof probably across the province, we couldn't replace —

*Interjection.*

**Hon Mr Sterling:** No, I haven't, actually.

**Mr Conway:** It sounded like you had.

**Hon Mr Sterling:** — all of the nuclear power that we might have to shut down for a period of time. It is compromise, but it's a practical answer that we must come up with on the bottom line.

Never before have we had the convergence of these two kinds of issues. On the one hand, we have had perhaps the greatest call into question of the performance of our nuclear program and the safety of the nuclear program. On the other hand, we are in the throes of an electricity restructuring exercise which this government is committed to and will be going ahead with in the very near future. I believe that the convergence of these two issues together will provide this committee with an unbelievable opportu-

nity to have an influence on the future of not only Ontario Hydro but also the electricity industry in this province, not only in the short term but in the long term.

1600

**Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland):** It's certainly a pleasure for me to be able to rise and say a few comments about the Hydro select committee that's in the process of being struck and also the motion to put it in place.

I, like many people in Ontario back in the middle of August, became very concerned when the news came out about the problems that we were having with Ontario Hydro. It's an organization that we in Ontario were very proud of for many years, but with that announcement a lot of concern was created — concern, first, for reliable power. Certainly the kind of industry that we need in Ontario, if we're going to go ahead economically, needs reliable power, there's just no question. When you see organizations like Ford saying that 10 years ago the cheapest power in the 17 regions where they produce cars was here in Ontario and now it's in something like 13th or 14th place, back in 1995, in 10 years they moved down a long way in the price of power. That's a second concern that I would see that most people in Ontario had when this announcement came out: What on earth is power going to cost in the future?

Ontario Hydro is already \$30 billion plus in debt, and with the interest on that debt, along with the problems we now have with nuclear power, there's a tremendous amount of concern with that, and also the safety at the three locations where we have nuclear power. What about the residents in those areas? It's great to have the assurance from the Atomic Energy Control Board that there is no immediate risk in the near future.

I'm very pleased to realize now just how the Ministry of Energy responded to the concerns that were expressed a year ago. We realized that Candu reactors were working better in other parts of the world than they were in Ontario and something wasn't quite right, so this commission was struck to do the assessment and that report came in with some rather unnerving information, to say the least. It's also great to see this government is responding to that assessment and is going to do something by appointing a select committee which is going to represent all three parties. I hope it operates in a very non-partisan way with the main objective to do something for and give some guidance and direction to this monopoly that we have in Ontario Hydro.

I know that for everyone in this Legislature, the safe, reliable and efficient operation of Ontario Hydro's nuclear facility is certainly a very top concern. I'm very pleased that the Legislature has agreed to form this select committee on Ontario Hydro nuclear affairs to scrutinize Ontario Hydro's nuclear recovery plan and its economic and environmental implications for Ontario. The committee will be chaired by the member for High Park-Swansea, who has had many years as a commissioner for electricity for the city of Toronto, and the Vice-Chair will be the member for Wilson Heights.

As the members know, Ontario Hydro's independent integrated performance assessment report made serious assertions about these operations, some that hit the headlines and indeed created considerable concern in Ontario. The Atomic Energy Control Board of Canada has assured us that the Hydro reactors do not constitute an immediate safety risk. I think that's important to really emphasize, that these things are not going to have a meltdown or blow up or have a very serious accident in the near future. They are safe in the way that they are operating. However, we realize that down the road they do need to be looked after and taken down and repaired and brought up in a proper sort of way.

Ontario Hydro has since released a nuclear recovery plan for bringing its reactors up to superior industry standards. I guess there's a lot of concern there in how much that's going to cost. A lot of figures have come out over the last while. We're talking in billions of dollars and we also hear of more billions of dollars in decommissioning these down the road, so it's obvious why the residents of Ontario are very concerned about the cost of Hydro in the future.

I believe that an urgent review of the Ontario Hydro plan by provincial public policymakers is necessary on a timely basis to ensure that the utility is kept on track. We must protect the best interests of both ratepayers and taxpayers in the province of Ontario. I certainly look forward to serving on this committee, along with the members for Bruce, Huron and Durham East, as well as the member for High Park-Swansea and the three members from the opposition and third parties. I think it's going to be a very interesting committee to work on. It looks like it's going to be an exceptionally busy committee, as we look at the reports and the time frame of getting those in.

Thanks very much to the opposition critics and the House leaders for their cooperation in developing this proposal for the committee and its mandate. They're to be congratulated for recognizing that the problems that have occurred at Ontario Hydro transcend several governments and transcend partisan politics. Certainly the problem didn't just happen the other day. The problem has been evolving for some time, maybe even back to previous Conservative governments. I don't think, as we head off on this, we should think along partisan lines at all, but should think very objectively as to what kind of report we can put together for the people of Ontario.

I'm certainly very pleased to be able to report that the committee has been empowered to call upon witnesses and the documentation that we may need to examine. We look forward to scrutinizing the independent integrated performance assessment report and the findings of the Atomic Energy Control Board of Canada report that was requested last month.

Our committee has been asked to return interim findings to the Legislature by October 3, with a final report submitted by December 1. It's going to be a tremendous amount of work by this committee and I'm pleased to see that there is some flexibility in those dates. The committee

will establish its own meeting schedule at a preliminary meeting later this week. As I said earlier, I certainly look forward to working with these various committee members on Hydro's future directions.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley):** Further debate?

**Mr Conway:** I want to rise this afternoon to share the opening time with my colleague Mr Phillips, the member for Scarborough-Agincourt, as the minister shared his time with Mr Galt. I hope it meets with the approval of the House that I will do that. I will take some of the time and the shadow chancellor, my friend from Scarborough, will take up the other portion.

We have, as has been indicated, a committee reference today to establish a select committee on Ontario Hydro. The specific reference is to Ontario Hydro's nuclear affairs. I want to support the motion and take a few moments this afternoon to indicate why.

We have, as the minister indicated, had precedent in this connection before. It was in 1976 that Mr Davis, as Premier, appointed a select committee — late 1975, actually; it might have been 1975. Right after the minority election of that year, a select committee on Hydro affairs was established under the very capable leadership of Donald C. MacDonald, long the member for York South and for several years the leader of the CCF-NDP in Ontario. I had the privilege of serving on that committee for some, though not all, of its reference. The fact that the committee did its work in a minority government environment from 1976 to 1980 I think probably made it a more balanced and more effective committee than might otherwise have been the case.

Several bromides have been offered here this afternoon, the best perhaps by the previous speaker from Northumberland, that we ought to remember that this is all above and beyond politics. I don't know that I can accept that, though I understand where that instinct might come from. It's my experience, I say to my friend the Minister of Agriculture, and he probably will not disagree, that in Ontario there has been nothing more essentially political than electricity and Ontario Hydro. We would all do well, I think, to understand that. It's been an intensely partisan issue but it's been a very fundamental issue.

Mr Villeneuve's predecessor, the late Osie F. Villeneuve, long the member from Glengarry, used to talk about the number of campaigns he had been through in that wonderful part of southeastern Ontario where rural electrification was the central and only question.

**1610**

My grandfather served here from 1929 to 1945, and he to his dying day recalled with lurid interest the great political scandals that Hydro produced in this province in his time. I have said before and I will repeat now, particularly for those free-marketers down on Bay Street, that the best, the most delicious, the most intriguing of all political scandals in the post-Confederation history of Ontario have been power and Hydro scandals. Many of them are richly detailed in our library. But is it political, Hydro? You bet. You ask the farmer on the fourth concession of Rawdon

township or the retail clerk in the middle of winter in Pembroke, Ontario, "Is Hydro political?" Absolutely, because it cuts to the core of our economic and social wellbeing.

I think one would have to be particularly naïve to imagine that we're going to debate this question above and beyond politics. The great sponsor of Ontario Hydro, Adam Beck, understood the small-p and the big-P political potentials of electricity better than anyone before or since. I'm not going to bore you today with that most marvellous of modern politicians, Adam Beck, but boy, we could all learn from his play book. In fact, I was just reading earlier the plaintive squeals of Premiers — Tory, farmer — who just said, "God, if we could only get the truth out of that man, if we could only get the whole story out of that man, if he would just stop blackmailing us, if we could just get the truth." This is not some caterwauling oppositionist; these are Premiers of this province.

At any rate, we've got a committee reference before us today. I support it, and I want to say again what I've said on several occasions publicly and privately over the last number of weeks: I believe that this Legislature has a duty to the Ontario taxpayers and to Hydro ratepayers to inquire into two basic questions in a rigorous and timely fashion. The first of those questions is simply this: What has gone wrong at the nuclear power division of Ontario Hydro, which power division now produces roughly three fifths to two thirds of all the electricity in the province?

The minister observed that this summer Mr Andognini, the executive vice-president of Ontario Hydro, tabled at the Hydro board in mid-July a remarkable report, the so-called IIPA report. Within a very few days the Hydro board announced its response: a multibillion-dollar recovery plan that among other things seeks to lay up — a wonderful Hydro phrase. Only the Hydrocrats would come up with a phrase like that. "We're going to lay up," they say, "fully 33% of the operating reactors in the province and set aside, not use, 4,200 megawatts of installed capacity." That's a dramatic withdrawal of capacity for whatever reason.

They go on to tell the farmers of Hastings and the young men and women of Stoney Creek: "Don't worry. We going to do all this and it's not going to affect the financial health of the corporation and it's certainly not going to affect your rates." Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus.

It is perhaps for old fogies like Mr Laughren and myself to observe just how remarkable was the event of August 12 or 13, whenever that was, in mid-August of this past summer, that the acting president and chair of the Hydro board, Bill Farlinger, came forward to announce the recovery plan and to release the independent integrated performance assessment report that was done by these US consultants on the nuclear power capacity at Ontario Hydro.

Not to be indelicate, but what we saw that day in mid-August was Ontario Hydro coming into the public domain and basically undressing and saying that every complaint that had ever been made against it, particularly against its

nuclear power capacity, was true and more than true. Unbelievable. I'm sure Norm Rubin and his friends could hardly contain themselves, I know the CBC could not contain itself, and at one level I suppose I understand their stupefaction, their incredulity, their joy, because the Hydrocrats were admitting now that this grand nuclear experiment had been much less than had been promised. Mrs Fisher is here and she knows better than I what the reaction was in a community like Kincardine when that report was made public — an unbelievable confession, so remarkable, so unbelievable, so swift, so comprehensive, so unexpected as to make an honest person wonder if more was going on than met the eye.

I said before and I will repeat now that I am not given to conspiracy theories, but I must say that one could certainly be justifiably sceptical about the events that led up to the release of the IIPA report and the Hydro recovery plan. I take issue with the minister in a couple of areas, although I thought he acquitted himself in a very ministerial fashion today. Reading from Mr Kupcis's letter of resignation, he said, and I quote from his letter dated August 12, "As disturbing as I find the consequences of the IIPA report, I, Al Kupcis, am very proud of the fact that I commissioned that report." Bill Farlinger didn't commission the report, as far as I know, and according to Mr Kupcis's letter, he said, for the record, "I commissioned the report."

#### *Interjection.*

**Mr Conway:** He was the president, that's correct. You just said, Minister, that it was Mr Farlinger who had launched this report, and I wanted to correct the record at least with reference to Dr Kupcis's letter. You shrug your shoulders, and we'll come back to that shrug momentarily.

It was very interesting. What did we get once the report went public on I think August 13? The quiet summer of 1997 was interrupted by what I could best describe as a big bang, and the first reaction was that the president of Ontario Hydro resigned forthwith. Dr Kupcis said: "It was on my watch. Notwithstanding the fact that I commissioned this report, I stand before you and take the blame and will take the walk" — and the package that goes with it.

The then chairman, Mr Farlinger, what did he say? This must have gone down well in places like Southampton and Port Elgin and Kincardine. Bill Farlinger, the acting president, the chairman who had been there for a couple of years, said, "Among the serious problems was the nuclear cult that seemed to infect the place." Mrs Fisher must have had an interesting Saturday morning breakfast at Kincardine when she met all those cultists. But that came almost immediately from the chair and now acting president, Bill Farlinger, well known to the first minister.

Perhaps most extraordinary of all was what I read in the Ottawa Citizen a few days later. Not to be outdone, Maurice Strong, a former chair during the period of 1991 to 1993 or 1994, told the Ottawa Citizen, and I'll only quote from part of an extraordinary interview, "Nuclear information basic to the health of the company" — mean-

ing Ontario Hydro — “was withheld in a move that borders on criminal behaviour.”

You're a ratepayer in Chelmsford, you're a Scarborough parent, and you're reading the paper: a cult; criminal behaviour. You really have to ask yourself the question, who was running the joint? Bill Farlinger was there as chairman for two years. Strong was there for two or three years. Kupcis was there for many years. All of a sudden — yes, Kupcis takes the walk, but nobody's much responsible for anything, and boy, do we get some pretty aggressive statements about criminal behaviour and cults.

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Well, I'm from Missouri. I'm a little bit sceptical, because I read in the public accounts and I read in the papers, thanks to the sunshine law, that the most highly paid public officials in the province are all at Ontario Hydro. But boy, nobody seems to have known what was going on and very few people beyond Kupcis seem to want to take any responsibility. As I've said here before, my information, which I consider unimpeachable, is that Kupcis got fired; he didn't resign.

I'm not going to take the time this afternoon to read from the Financial Post of the weekend of August 30-September 1, an opinion piece by none other than Hugh Segal, called “Ontario Hydro Didn't Have to Let Kupcis Fall on His Own Sword.” Segal raises some very interesting points. He raises some very valid questions about what's really been going on at the corporation. I'll tell you, if you've got any ability to decipher a not very elaborate code, you might want to read that article and join the Missouri crowd, who wonder just who's on first and what's on second.

The minister smiles. I guess I'm being a little bit too irreverent this afternoon because, despite what some folks said earlier, we've been down this path before in one way or another. I've been around it more than most. I've stood in this assembly for the better part of 22 years defending Ontario Hydro's nuclear commitment, and I still defend it. It's a hell of a lot harder to defend it today than it was two months ago, but I'm not prepared to abandon nuclear power. Like Segal, I believe it will continue to be an important part of the energy mix, but clearly, mistakes were made.

As I said earlier, we have an obligation in the public interest, as hopefully a self-respecting Legislature, to answer a couple of questions: What went wrong at Ontario Hydro nuclear and how are we going to recommend fixing it? If anybody thinks we are going to seriously deal with that question and offer an interim report within two or three weeks, you are on a different planet than I am. There is a way I think one could honestly take those initial terms of reference in so far as time lines are concerned and imagine them to be a contempt of the Legislature. Nobody who wants to do a good job is going to be able to answer the questions, what went wrong and how are we going to fix it, in two weeks.

I want to say to the members who are going to join this committee for the first time that you're in for a very interesting, educational and stimulative experience. I know

when I joined 20 years ago it took me several days just to understand what the corporation was, what it did and what that remarkable document, the Power Corporation Act, entailed. If you want to see a watertight monopoly, folks, you spend some time with the Power Corporation Act. You're going to have to spend some time and you're going to have to hope there's someone there to explain the nuance and to take you through the several layers.

We're generalists, and we ought not to imagine that we're going to use this committee as an excuse to micro-manage the corporation. I'm not interested. There are lots of people at Hydro to do that.

As for the minister's observation, “We need an interim report because the board has a right to know what you're thinking,” let me tell you, if the experience in the late 1970s is any guide, half the committee room will be populated with information folks from Ontario Hydro, notwithstanding the minister's scowl. There will be more folks around there watching that committee from Hydro than you can shake a stick at. So when the Toronto Sun has gas about perhaps the committee having some independent resources, I would say let people have gas because if we're going to do our job, we have to have some reasonable capacity to assess what it is they're doing.

As one of my friends who knows the business well tells me, part of the problem at the corporation has been — I hate to say it with the minister — the iron-ring disease. I think there's some truth to that. Good people, but it is such an engineering mentality that is shot through the entire corporation that there's a problem. But the point I want to make is that there is an important job to do and it's going to take time and it's going to take resources.

What made the committee successful in 1976 and later was not only, I say to the reverend member for High Park-Swansea, the able and dispassionate leadership of Don MacDonald in the chair, but people like Alan Schwartz and Jim Fisher, who were staff to the committee. They did excellent work and prepared committee members for the questions, the briefings and the cross-examination that such an exercise necessarily entails.

I want to say in her absence, Evelyn Gigantes, the former member for Ottawa East, the New Democrat — now, Normie, smile and be charitable.

#### *Interjections.*

**Mr Conway:** I've got to tell you, Evelyn and I didn't agree on much, but she did incredibly good work on that committee, hard work, diligent work, that set a standard for the rest of us that we generally didn't meet. Floyd might remember what Mr Nixon said one day when he was asked about some aspect of detailed analysis and suggested to the inquiring journalist that he really talk to Evelyn since she knew more than anybody else or the committee as a whole. But seriously, she did very good work and she didn't have that reputation without an awful lot of effort.

I simply want to make the point this afternoon that we have got to have reasonable time and reasonable resources. Because the history of Ontario Hydro, I want to say again, has been this very powerful, unique corporation

that was designed in the beginning to be a public corporation beyond the control of the politicians. That was basic to Beck's plan. Much of that legacy has endured, irrespective of whether it was Churley or Conway or Sterling in the minister's chair.

I agree with the previous speaker who said, "You know, we've all been involved," and we have been. I was a minister for five and a half years trying to run a fairly large department. I was up to my neck in troubles with my own department and when the problems of Ontario Hydro were presented to me, I didn't have as much energy and time as I would have liked or as I had as a private member in the opposition.

That's a reality and most of the Hydro managers in the last 85 years have operated knowing that. I don't mean to slight the sterling minister of the moment, but the fact of the matter is that one of the other interesting realities, not well understood until you're in government in this province, is that the minister responsible for Hydro is not the Minister of Energy. It's the Premier, it's the first minister. There's a well-established internal protocol developed over the decades to allow that to happen.

I think the current minister is too fresh in his duties, but my experience, I say both personal and academic on this subject, would lead me to conclude that over the century there have probably been only two ministers of energy who have really had an impact reining the beast in on the grounds of accountability. Those two people were Bob Macaulay in the late 1950s and early 1960s, and Darcy McKeogh in the mid-1970s — very strong-willed, powerful senior ministers. I think if both of them were here today, and they're both alive, and certainly in Neil Freeman's book, *The Politics of Power*, just published last year by the U of T Press on the subject of Ontario Hydro and its relations with government, Darcy McKeogh would probably tell you that he lost much more than he won.

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One of the issues with which we are going to have to try to deal is, how do we make this crown corporation reasonably accountable to the Legislature, to the government? I repeat, I am not interested in running the corporation, but I am interested in helping set general policy directions and encouraging the responsible minister and the cabinet of the day to exact some accountability and responsibility for the course that has been decided in the public interest by government with some involvement by the Legislature.

The essential questions, it seems to me, in the first aspect of the reference that is launching this select committee today are: What went wrong at Ontario Hydro nuclear, and is the so-called recovery plan an appropriate response and remedy to the difficulty?

Let me just take a moment to summarize the Andognini report. I just want to remind everybody. The Hydro board apparently got this very explosive report on or about July 21 and within two weeks they had formulated a substantial, multibillion-dollar response. Wow, I say. Wow.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Conway:** Harry, I don't know whether the farmers of Rawdon township would decide on a multimillion-dollar or multibillion-dollar plan in a few weeks of summer activity, but that's what Hydro did. The corporation that stood before us just a few weeks ago and set aside its every protestation of the last three decades, announced the following: Overall, the entire nuclear power reactor system, at an operational level, was only minimally acceptable; on maintenance, the system was only minimally acceptable; on training, it was only minimally acceptable; on engineering, similarly so; on quality; on radiation protection; on chemistry; and on emergency preparedness they were below standard.

Talk about standing up in public and taking your pants down and exposing the warts of the ages. This is it. I don't mean to be indelicate, but the member for Algoma will know of what I speak. For people who've been around, this is an unbelievable confession and it comes from people who said, "It could never happen, it would never happen, trust us, believe me etc."

But there's more. Having done all of that, in this remarkable about-face they say, "But we have a plan, a multibillion-dollar plan," according to Farlinger, "all ready to go." In fact everything I see, and I read the Hydro materials fairly carefully, they are already now planning on that basis. I can't believe up in Muskoka or in the leafy greens of Rosedale that even the most redoubtable Conservatives and Reform-a-Tories aren't saying: "Hold on. What's wrong with this picture? Maybe, just maybe, somebody somewhere should take a second independent look."

That is my point. The committee must undertake independent evaluation of that plan. I know for a fact that senior officials in the Ministry of Finance and elsewhere in the economic departments of the Ontario government have a high level of concern about the efficacy of this plan. I was in Deep River on the weekend talking to a number of the scientific community that I represent and these people were absolutely stupefied by the drastic nature of the Farlinger recovery plan. To put it politely, my constituents in Deep River are incredulous, very dubious.

I say to the minister, I say to the House, if we're going to be serious and be taken seriously, we have to, in a timely and disciplined fashion, get some outside independent analysis of that recovery plan. That, I think, is the centrepiece of the work we have to do, and I can tell you that that will not be done in the next 15 to 20 days.

I repeat, to the minister particularly, I am not interested in an endless belt that's going to be just an excuse to meet with wonderfully convivial people like the Reverend Shea and the even more convivial Dr Galt. I have better things to do with my time and the public money than to engage in some kind of sham or scam. I go into this with good faith, as I believe all members do, and I think we can and should be able to do good work, but I want to be clear about what my conditions are going in, and I don't think they're unreasonable.

I was happy to hear the minister say that he will at an early date release — I'm anxious to see the white paper on electricity reform, because there is just no way any group of members, any group of citizens, could or would be able to evaluate the recovery plan without understanding the broader context into which the recovery plan will fit. I don't expect the minister's white paper, green paper, yellow paper, is going to detail every specific energy initiative, but I do expect to get some greater clarity from the minister and the Harris government on where it believes electricity policy reform will take us and will take the giant utility that is Ontario Hydro. That's a critical question.

Really, the second part of the reference is that: What is the future for Ontario Hydro? I think there is a consensus that has developed over the last number of years that certain aspects of change are already agreed to. The Hydro monopoly on generation, we have all agreed, is over; at least that's the way I read it. The New Democrats and the Liberals certainly encouraged non-utility generation. The fact of the matter is that we had some very, very sluggish economic circumstances in the late, late, late 1980s and throughout the early 1990s. It's true.

**Hon Mr Villeneuve:** Not the mid-late-late 1980s?

**Mr Conway:** The demand curve dropped sharply in 1989, and from 1989 through to at least 1993-94 it was a very sharp downward trend. It was not unlike other jurisdictions.

That's the problem with the energy business: You've got to plan for the intermediate and longer term. I sat in the cabinet. When I look back on it now, we certainly made mistakes, no doubt about it, but we were trying to make policy with a surging demand, a demand that was far greater than Dr Porter's royal commission suggested just seven or eight years before.

The New Democrats come to office and they are faced with a very different set of economic circumstances. The demand curve crashes. By 1992 or 1993, when Darlington came on stream, with Darlington we were at something like 40% to 50% overcapacity. That was as much a function of dropping demand as it was increasing generation.

My granddaddy was here. Boy, did the Liberals get themselves in a mess, a real mess, back in the 1930s. Some of the most outrageous behaviour on the Hydro question came from those Liberals in the 1930s. One of the greatest lawyers — well, he was certainly a pretty distinguished lawyer — Arthur Roebuck, who was here as justice minister and energy minister in the 1930s, believed that those power contracts the Tories negotiated with the Quebec gang were evil incarnate, that they were absolutely immoral and worse. He was going to cancel them at all costs, and he did. He got away with it for a relatively short period of time because the Depression had literally kicked the stuffing out of demand. But I'll tell you, did the Liberals ever have to suck it up a very few years later when the economy started to turn around again. And guess what? They had the moral high ground and they had very little electricity and there was a mad scramble. That's not

unusual, particularly when you get gyrations in economic growth, and that's what we've had over the last 10 years.

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We're going to have to decide some questions about Ontario Hydro. My colleagues have said, my leader has said, that we can and ought to do much more in the area of conservation. We've all said that, and I hope we can do more than we've done in the past. Certainly Dalton McGuinty believes we can and should do that. I believe very strongly that the time has come for a totally different kind of regulatory framework at Ontario Hydro. For good or for ill, I have come to believe after a long time and many mistakes in this business that you're not going to change some of the Hydro behaviour under which we have all suffered and laboured in government unless and until you create a much more modern, meaningful and rigorous regulatory environment for the electricity sector in this province. I'm anxious to take some expert testimony on that subject.

I think there are other aspects of change in the electricity — competition, we all agree, in generation, its day has come. I believe there can and should be a substantial rationalization on the retail and distribution. There the big fight, quite frankly, is going to be, in first instance at least, between the two aspects of public power: the local utilities and the provincial utility. We've seen down in the Niagara Peninsula in the Lincoln case just how difficult a battle that's going to be.

I think there are ingredients for change that we've all subscribed to. The Hydro monopoly in generation is over. I believe a rigorous new regulatory environment is called for. I think there has to be a streamlining in retail and distribution. I think there's a greater role for private sector energy services corporations. I think there has to be more competition in the sector generally. The community expects it, and I think there are benefits that will accrue to all of us with that.

Having said all that, I don't believe we can or should just dismember Ontario Hydro. One of the reasons that can't and won't happen is this IIPA. Ontario Hydro's current asset base is largely nuclear. Roughly 60% to 65% of its generation is nuclear. You heard me talking to the Minister of Finance about his public accounts: \$29 billion worth of Hydro debt guaranteed by Her Majesty's Ontario government. Most of that guaranteed debt attaches to the nuclear assets.

Does anybody think seriously that after the release of this report we are going to privatize the nuclear power division of Ontario Hydro?

**Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon):** Who's going to buy it?

**Mr Conway:** I don't believe we are and I don't think we will. I live on the Quebec border and I'm always struck by the fact that there are people like the Macdonald commission who think we can just, you know, with the will of the wisp, sell off the Ottawa River hydroelectric assets. When we ask the question, "Has anybody asked Bernard Landry and Bouchard? These plants are all anchored in the province of Quebec. Has anybody bothered

to talk to Quebec about this?" "No, that's just a mere trifle." Maybe it is, but I come back to the question I guess we were —

*Interjection.*

**Mr Conway:** There are profoundly important political questions in this energy debate.

Let me digress for a moment on another one. I never cease to be amazed at how many people engage in this hydroelectricity debate in Ontario assuming that we are geographically like a Connecticut tucked into the bottom of southern California. A surprising number of smart people don't seem to understand the self-evident reality that Ontario is a very large jurisdiction that is very vast, most of it quite empty, and all of it rather cold for four or five months of the year.

Those basic geographic and sociological realities have a very real impact on energy policy. If you're in southern England in the middle of winter and the power goes out, it's uncomfortable but you can probably get through the night. If the power goes out at Pickle Lake in the middle of January, I'm going to tell you, you have a very different kind of reality.

**Mr Pouliot:** Yes, but you eat well in Pickle Lake.

**Mr Conway:** I'm deadly serious about this. We've got over a million people in this province who get their electricity directly from the provincial utility. Most of these people, apart from the big industrial customers, live in rural and northern Ontario. I want to know, as somebody who represents one of the most rural parts of eastern Ontario, what the free marketeers have to say about delivering safe, affordable, reliable electricity to my constituents in Matawatchan, Madawaska, Calabogie and Camel Chute.

That's a very important question and, you know, I don't get very many answers about specific commitments. I'm sure there are answers, and I don't mean to be some kind of Neanderthal who does not want to admit to the existence or the possible application of those answers, but I want to make the point that, as we look at the future of Ontario Hydro, we are looking at some of the most central questions that face the economic and social life of this province.

It has been observed by some that because Ontario Hydro has grown so very large and has become so reliant on one technology, namely, nuclear, we can't take a strike, and because we can't take a strike we've got a management problem. That's something I think we ought to look at in the course of our deliberations.

All of which is to say that I think we have important work to do. I'm anxious to get at it expeditiously. I look to the Chair. I'm encouraged by the membership of the committee. We are going to be working at close quarters. I expect there will be some significant differences of opinion on certain issues.

I want to say in conclusion, however, that I go forward in good faith with good purpose, but at my advanced parliamentary years I have much better things to do with my time than to participate in some kind of legislative cover for some preordained scheme that may derive from

the very people who helped create the problem and may aggravate the very problem that we're all trying to cure. I know the minister to be a man of goodwill and good faith. I look forward to going into this exercise with him and other colleagues to hopefully show the people of Ontario that the Legislature is up to discharging one of its classic responsibilities.

**Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt):** I'm pleased to join the debate on the establishment of this committee and to say I share my colleague's view that the membership on the committee looks very good. Our two members, Mr Conway and Mr Kwinter, are extremely good. Mr Laughren has a world of experience. I don't know the members from the Conservative Party as well obviously, because many of them are newer, but I do know Mr Shea and I think he'll do a fine job as the Chairman.

I just want to talk a little bit about some of the things that we'll be looking to come out of the study. The minister mentioned an interesting fact, that it's the largest capital corporation, I think you said, in Canada. Without any question, this is a huge business. I don't think there's a major financial institution in Canada that hasn't studied Ontario Hydro and the possible ways of parts of it being privatized, parts of it remaining in the public. We are dealing with something where there is a substantial amount of taxpayers' money at risk here, so I support my colleague who was mentioning the need for adequate resources for the committee. As I say, there have been literally dozens of huge studies done on the business potential of privatizing portions of Hydro. What we want, obviously, out of this committee is what is in the best interests of Ontario over the next 50 years.

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It struck me as an odd coincidence, actually, that for a period of time there were rumours that the Ontario government planned to privatize Hydro. Then the mood of the public was reflected in real concern about that. Any polling we have seen done that has been made public indicates that Ontarians have some concern about that. Clearly this latest revelation in the middle of August has shaken Ontario's faith in their Ontario Hydro and its ability to deliver electricity at a reasonable rate.

With that one single admission, as my colleague said, a startling and quite a confidence-shaking admission in the middle of August, Ontario is now up for looking at Ontario Hydro and electricity not from a completely clean piece of paper, but certainly looking at all the options. That's the first point I wanted to make, the importance of the committee and the recognition that we are dealing here with I guess the largest public utility in North America — I think it is; the minister is shaking his head — the largest utility in North America, public or private.

The legislative committee has its work cut out, and certainly I was pleased to hear the minister say that the dates in his statement today that he mentioned are targets or goals, but the government is prepared to be flexible on that.

The second thing I wanted to mention is the importance to the financial health of Ontario of Ontario Hydro. My colleague Mr Conway mentioned the auditor's report, and what the auditor points out — and these actually are notes that the auditor put in the government of Ontario's financial statements, but there are also similar notes in Ontario Hydro's annual report. It says, "Of this \$16 billion that may not be fully recoverable," they go on to say that there is an estimated \$16 billion of "potentially stranded debt."

What I think the auditor is saying is that there's up to \$16 billion; there's some significant amount of Ontario Hydro's debt that may be, to use the jargon of the accountants, stranded, which could mean that the Ontario taxpayers are on the hook for that, because Ontario Hydro's debt, over its history, I guess, has been guaranteed by the province of Ontario. As a matter of fact, Ontario Hydro pays the province a couple hundred million dollars a year for that. For the privilege of the Ontario public backstopping Ontario Hydro's debt, Ontario Hydro writes a cheque to the Ontario government, to the taxpayers of Ontario, for a couple hundred million dollars. That has been all well and good, because it doesn't look like it dramatically impacted our credit rating, and Ontario Hydro has paid that sum of money, a couple hundred million dollars a year, to the coffers of Ontario.

Now, though, we see there was a risk in that. The auditor is pointing out that up to \$16 billion could be stranded debt. Certainly, it's quite possible that in the end some significant amount of Ontario Hydro's debt could end up on the Ontario government books. Who knows what it might be, because obviously part of the committee's work is looking at the recovery plan. If even half of that \$16 billion ended up on the province's books, \$8 billion, that annually would be a charge of somewhere around \$700 million a year in interest payments that the taxpayers of Ontario would have to pick up.

That's the second reason why the committee's work is extremely important. If indeed a significant part of Ontario Hydro's debt, when everything clears and the recovery plan is fully in play and the future of Hydro unfolds, if the taxpayers are going to be on the hook for, as I say, even half that stranded debt, it has a significant impact on the cost to Ontario, because \$800 million is a lot of money in annual interest payments.

It also has an impact on our credit rating. I don't think there's any doubt that Ontario's books are improving. All of us had been hoping that Ontario's credit rating would be upgraded at some time in the near future. We've had three downgrades over the last five or six years; we were looking for an upgrade. But the credit rating agencies have warned us that Ontario Hydro's predicament, because the province is guaranteeing, may very well slow down the credit rating improvement.

Why is that important? The interest rates you pay are determined on the basis of your creditworthiness. Companies and governments pay money to credit rating agencies to rate the creditworthiness of companies and governments so they can loan them money at a certain interest rate. That's the second important role this committee's going to

play: Is there a risk to the taxpayers that a significant amount of Ontario's debt could end up on the books of Ontario and therefore the taxpayers are on the hook for it?

I also am pleased to hear the minister talking about the environmental impact of these moves. It was ironic to most Ontarians when the Governor of New York indicated his concern about Ontario polluting the state of New York. I think all of us in Ontario believe we are leaders in the environment; we see Ontario as playing a leadership role. We have always been the first to be critical of bordering US states that contribute to pollution in Ontario. Certainly there's been an ongoing battle between the province of Ontario and city of Detroit about an incinerator in Detroit that is polluting — my colleague from Essex will know that — parts of Ontario.

My point is that we found it ironic and I think a bit embarrassing and a bit of a confidence-shaker in our environment to hear the Governor of New York saying he has real concerns about the pollution impact of Ontario Hydro's recovery plan. I think all of us are aware of the overview of the plan to keep Ontario Hydro generating electricity during this period where a significant number of the nuclear generators are shut down. What's going to have to happen is the fossil fuel generating stations are going to be cranked up, either reopened, several of them, or the ones that are open operating at a higher capacity, many of them I gather using coal, which is obviously much more of a pollutant than other forms of energy generation.

That's the third thing our caucus will be looking to the select committee to focus on: What is the short-term environmental impact of Ontario Hydro bridging itself from the current shutdown of the nuclear generators to the reopening, or whatever that plan is, and the environmental impact of the future generation?

We'll also be interested in some of the financial aspects of Hydro. One of the reasons we are into such an enormous amount of debt at Ontario Hydro is of course the Darlington nuclear plant. In that particular case, first there was an enormous cost overrun, as most of are familiar; second, it took substantially longer; and third, the way the accounting takes place for that is that none of the interest cost and none of the annual cost of construction were ever reported on the books until the day Darlington opened. It was like a licence to spend a lot of money without ever actually reporting it as an expense on the books until the day it opened.

1700

Of course, as we all know, if you take eight or nine years to build something that mammoth and you've got the compounding interest building up, plus all the compounding expense — there was an enormous cost of Darlington, none of it ever reported as an expense till the day it opened.

I'll say as an aside that that's exactly the same accounting that's taking place on Highway 407 right now. None of that is being shown as an expense. The interest on all the expense is piling up until they begin operating the toll roads. We've got a mini mini Darlington in Highway

407. It's the same accounting. I have, in a different way, some of the same concerns about 407 and its economic viability because it's taking so long to begin the toll operation and so much of the expense is building up.

There's a fourth thing I want to say about the importance of the work of this committee. All of us have dealt with industry in our constituencies. We all know the importance they place on competitive energy costs. Historically, that's been an enormous advantage in Ontario, that we have had a competitive advantage on energy costs. My colleague Monte Kwinter knows far more about this than I do, but it has been a selling point historically for Ontario: Come to Ontario, a first-class workforce, a great environment to live in, close to huge markets, but also some energy advantages, initially because of our water power or hydro power. So the fourth area of concern for our caucus will be, what is this going to mean in terms of future energy costs and competitive advantage for Ontario?

It's extremely important, because some of our biggest industries are heavy, heavy users of power. Our auto sector, which is the engine that's driving the Ontario economy, no question about that, is a heavy user of power.

**Mr Pouliot:** Mining.

**Mr Phillips:** My colleague said mining, and that's exactly right. The Kidd Creek plant is perhaps the largest user of power in Ontario, perhaps in North America. For the economic engines driving our province, having a competitive advantage in some form on our power is extremely important.

The work of the committee can't be underestimated. I take my hat off to the members who are serving on it. As my friend Mr Conway said, he's not interested in simply filling in time. The interim report and the final report of this committee could very well reshape Ontario Hydro, as I said earlier, the largest utility in North America. There's a huge interest at stake here.

The committee will be getting expert advice from many different angles, much of it with a vested interest, a legitimate, honest vested interest. There are many who would believe that significant portions of this should be privatized and they will make a strong case for it, biased for their own interests, obviously, but a legitimate bias. The committee is going to have to sort its way through that. The future of our financial credit rating is at stake here, and the committee's going to have to work its way through that.

There's perhaps nothing that will have a bigger impact on the environment over the next two to three years than how Hydro is going to replace the power lost by the shut-down of the nuclear generators. Of course, finally, there's the issue of whether Ontario will be able to continue to say, "We've got a competitive advantage here on power, so expand your auto plant here, invest in some processing from our mines, because we can compete."

My colleague mentioned the array of options that will be put before the committee on generation, on transmission and on local services. Already most of us have been talked to by local utilities which have a view on how and

who can best serve that, by many in the private sector who have a view on how and best that can be served.

To close, I appreciate the members who are sitting on the committee. I'll be looking forward to their work, and simply say good luck with it. To a very large extent, the future of Hydro is going to be very much shaped by the work of that committee.

**The Acting Speaker:** Further debate?

**Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt):** I want to engage in this debate for a short time as we move towards setting up a select committee on Ontario Hydro. As the minister is aware, I did not particularly like the idea of a legislative committee in the first place. I felt, given the enormity and the technical aspects of the problems at Ontario Hydro nuclear, that there should be an independent commission of inquiry. The minister and the government have obviously moved forward with the determination to proceed with the select committee of the Legislature. Given that, I understand that and I'm prepared to serve on the committee and to work hard at it. I don't intend to make a long speech today and I want to split the time with my colleagues.

I look forward to working on the committee. I believe the member for High Park-Swansea, Mr Shea, has the wherewithal to run a good committee and I very much look forward to working with him in that regard. I don't mean by that that he's not a partisan creature, any less than any of the other members of the committee, including the opposition. As I mentioned earlier this afternoon, I found it somewhat passing strange that the minister would refer to the non-partisan aspects of this committee, when if that really was predominant in his mind he would have appointed an independent commission. But I don't want to dwell on that.

For those students of Ontario history, of which I don't consider myself one but nevertheless have done some reading on it, one of the most fascinating aspects of our history is how often Ontario Hydro comes to the surface when historians write about the province. One of the ones I enjoyed the most was the biography of Mitch Hepburn. The member for Renfrew North mentioned Roebuck, the minister who was involved at that time, and some of the problems they got themselves into. Even since I became a member — even though it's a long time ago, it's recent history — there have been select committees looking at Ontario Hydro as well.

Ontario Hydro will always play a central role in this province, and I have no doubt in my mind whatsoever that one of the main underpinnings of Ontario's prosperity was begun by the electrification of the province. I don't think many people would argue with that. It's terribly important that we understand that and appreciate it and make sure we go forward so that that part of Hydro's role is allowed to continue.

1710

The terms of reference for this committee — and I think some members need to be reminded of this — are relatively narrow in that they deal with the nuclear part of Ontario Hydro. Where that gets a little bit fuzzy, it seems

to me — by the way, the title is the select committee on Ontario Hydro nuclear affairs. You could say, when you look at the terms of reference, that means the committee can deal only with the nuclear component of Ontario Hydro. However, when you start looking at the recovery plans of Ontario Hydro, then you have to expand beyond the narrow nuclear definition that's in the title of the select committee. I don't know how we're going to avoid that. I simply don't know how we're going to avoid it.

If there's going to be an appropriate analysis of the recovery plan, which is hugely expensive — we're talking now \$6.5 billion to \$8.8 billion as part of the recovery to get the thing back in good working order. That's a huge amount of money, and in case there was a recommendation to decommission one or more of the plants, that doesn't include those dollars. They are gigantic on top of that. So if those numbers are accurate, \$8.8 billion wouldn't reflect the total cost if there's any decommissioning.

The other thing is, even though those folks are engineers, I don't know how they came to those numbers as quickly as they did when they received the report that said there were problems there. I know the minister is an engineer —

**Mr Conway:** And a lawyer.

**Mr Laughren:** — and a lawyer, and I guess that makes him a nuclear physicist, I'm not sure, or maybe just a rocket scientist. I'm not sure what it makes him, but thank goodness he's there with some technical expertise.

As I look at this, I think to myself, it's appropriate that somebody at least looks at the nuclear division and the recovery plan, because as has been said before, the people who have devised the recovery plan are the people who got us to where we are now — the same people. Maybe some of the faces change as time goes on, but basically those are the folks who got us here, and it's not appropriate that we just simply accept what they say. That's just simply not good enough.

I can recall when the nuclear programs were being developed and all sorts of people were very critical and opposed to the nuclear option, they were treated as Luddites in our society. "Oh, no, this is something we must do. We must proceed with nuclear. After all," they said, "we're going to have this great Darlington facility and it's only going to cost \$4 billion." Four billion, that's what they said, and now at the end of the day of course it's in the neighbourhood of \$14 billion — slightly more. But let's not blame the Tories, because as the minister says, this is a non-partisan issue, so I will certainly not do that. Of course, we know that the Liberals decided to continue with the completion of Darlington when they were in office. So it does go on, but I don't want to get into that.

I want to re-emphasize, though, what the member for Renfrew North said about how serious this problem is. When I was reading the IIPA report, it really is remarkable when you look at the assessment of their nuclear division. I'll give you a definition of what "minimally acceptable" means. It means "performance is substantially below industry standards but produces minimally accept-

able results, and immediate management attention is required to improve performance." And "every aspect of the nuclear division is minimally acceptable except emergency preparedness, which is below standard." That's cold comfort.

We're not dealing here with just simply a nice, warm and fuzzy review of a major public utility. We're dealing with major problems in the nuclear division and we've simply got to get to them. That's why I'm sure the Chair, Mr Shea, will have the support of the opposition members of the committee to make sure that there's appropriate expertise that the committee is able to employ during this short period of time during which we're examining these problems, because the members of the committee are not experts on any aspect of Hydro, as far as I know. I don't know any of them who are an expert on it. Believe me, we're going to need help if we're going to get to the bottom of the problems and, second, to say where we go from here.

Who's to say that what Hydro says is the recovery plan is the appropriate one? Is it environmentally sound? Is it economically sound? I can tell you, for me, the jury is still out. I'm not prejudging it, because, as I say, I don't have the expertise in that regard and I don't think other members of the committee do. But we sure have to get some answers because it would be irresponsible for the committee to accept that report unless we were sure those were the best alternatives. Anything else would be irresponsible. So we do have to look at the alternatives.

That's why it's so terribly important that the minister's white paper is put before the committee at the earliest opportunity, because for us to be talking about a recovery plan that includes some other aspects of power generation besides nuclear — if for example, and I really am speaking hypothetically here, the committee decided it was appropriate to close down a reactor and to perhaps even decommission it — I'm not prejudging, because I don't know that — if that was the case, where do we go from there, because the day of surplus energy at Hydro is over. Those of us in this party have always said that we were not prepared to open up the generation of power into the Hydro grid as long as there was a surplus of power there already. It made no sense. But now that's gone. Those days are gone, and I suspect they're gone for the foreseeable future, anyway.

We know that as we go down the road, there's going to be enormous pressure, and I think appropriately so, for competition to start feeding into the Ontario Hydro grid in the form of co-gens and so forth. I think that's inevitable. I personally don't have a problem with that because the surplus is no longer there. There's going to be a big fight between the Municipal Electric Association and Ontario Hydro and the Ontario government. It's going to be a blood sport and I'm glad I'm around to see that.

I did want to comment a little on the report. I was truly perplexed by the comments in the report about labour and labour relations. They didn't consult labour when they did the report, apparently — that's what the labour people tell me — and yet they come in here and they blame labour for

management not doing its job. I find it hard to accept that coming from management types, from management people. If they can't do the job, get out. Somebody else will get in there and do the job of management properly. But to blame the fact that they couldn't manage on the fact that labour couldn't be controlled is ludicrous — completely ludicrous. I can't imagine why they would have put that in the report.

I was going to give you an example just to show you how silly I think they are. Under labour relations it says, "Certain provisions of the union contracts" — who negotiated those contracts? The labour movement didn't negotiate them with themselves, they negotiated them with Hydro management — "limit the effectiveness of management."

I want to tell you, if I was management, I'd be ashamed to say that or admit that.

"Major issues include the following:

"Collective agreement restraints." You didn't have to agree to them. "Purchased services agreement restrictions; strike threat." If there's a strike threat, what does that mean? They have the right to strike. If you think they shouldn't have it, then you have the power to take it away from them. I don't understand this.

"Fitness for duty." If it isn't the role of management to make sure that people in these kinds of sensitive jobs are fit for duty, whose responsibility is it? Well the people themselves, of course, but at the end of the day it's their responsibility.

"Personnel and vehicular searches; too many union officials on full-time release." I want to tell you, in an operation that size, with half a dozen people out on release, I don't want to take the whole report apart but there's some real silliness there that I hope the committee doesn't get itself caught up in, because those are not the problems of Ontario Hydro.

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**Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South):** Knowing this government, they probably will. "Strip the collective agreement; that will fix the problem," they'll say.

*Interjections.*

**Mr Laughren:** I'll wait.

**Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East):** Wait till the heckling from your own side stops.

**Mr Laughren:** That's right. I didn't want to say it, but you're right.

**Mr Laughren:** One of the problems on the whole issue of the government's white paper and the question of competition and privatization which is sort of hanging over the generation and distribution of power in this province like a cloud, it seems to me, is, what happens if you do decide to bring in competition and/or privatize, the whole issue of those stranded assets and the stranded debt?

If ever any government in this province decided they were going to put back on the taxpayers at large some of the debt that's related to Hydro, I think there would be and should be a ratepayers' revolt in Ontario. That is Ontario Hydro debt that should be paid for by the ratepayers of the province. I know you can say there's only one ratepayer,

but there is a difference between people who use hydro and how much they use and people who use other sources of power, and that distinction should remain. I would be very unhappy if anybody ever tried to isolate the debt in order to privatize and have the taxpayers at large pick up the tab on the debt.

I simply will conclude by saying I will support the appointment of this select committee and I intend to work with it in a serious way. If I could just reinforce what the member for Renfrew North said, both of us come into this, I think, with the right approach to making it work. I have no doubt that we can. But if it ever appears that there's an attempt here to simply do a whitewash or to ignore pertinent data, I think both the member from Renfrew and I would be long gone and would not be part of that.

I take it seriously. I think there's an opportunity here to say some important things about the future of Hydro, and in particular about its recovery plan, because I for one could be convinced that what has been laid out by the Hydrocrats or nuclearcrats or whatever you want to call them is the right plan, but I really find that I'm going to need some convincing in that regard. If the experts we hire for the committee can help us in that regard, so much the better. My mind is not closed in that regard, but I think that a sceptical mind coming into an operation like this is a healthy one.

I look forward to working with the Chair, the members of the opposition and the other members of the committee. While I think the time lines are not terribly realistic, there's nothing wrong with keeping some pressure on the committee to get its work done. I understand that; I just wonder about how realistic it is. Nevertheless, we will undertake our task with enthusiasm, and I hope very much that at the end of the day the people of the province will say that we did a service and that Ontario Hydro will be a better institution as a result of it.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier):** Further debate?

**Mr Pouliot:** In a broadly summarized form, I shall be brief indeed. Why is it that whenever I as a citizen read about or listen to Ontario Hydro, the largest agency in Ontario, I have from time to time the very vivid impression that I'm listening to government, I'm reading about government, a form of government, maybe the second-largest government in the province? It's an entity.

By all accounts, people are cautioning that over the years Ontario Hydro exceeded its broad mandate, a mandate which is to provide electricity at a reasonable cost, and reliable electricity so we don't have to fear any brownout or any blackout, that there will be sufficient electricity.

Ontario Hydro under the act also has the power to charge for that electricity, so there's one hand that spends and builds facilities, provides power, and the other hand that charges consumers, residential, commercial and industrial consumers. Any residual money, any money left over, is put into a pool. It doesn't go back to the province, and yet when we look at the debt structure we see that Ontario Hydro, as of March 31, 1997 — this year — had

a debt exceeding \$29 billion, which is roughly the same amount of money they owed a year before: in 1996, \$29 billion, and in 1997, \$29 billion. This is the amount of money which is guaranteed by the province. Do you get me now, Mr Speaker, when we say, "Are they or are they not a government?"

They seem to be a government when it serves their purpose. For instance, they ask the province of Ontario to guarantee the money they have to borrow, yet they forget about their association with the government when it's time to run the affairs of electricity. If you ask can they or can they not have it both ways, Ontario Hydro, by way of cartel and monopoly, has done exactly that and has done it very well — very badly if you happen to be a consumer, a citizen of Ontario.

Are you aware that the effective interest rate, the weighted average — because they're on the hook long-term; there's no getting out of this — in 1997 is 11.47%? That's in Canadian dollars for the Canadian market, people who buy those coupons, those debentures; and because their debt is structured long-term, not like a guaranteed investment certificate, when you get to the United States of America, because there are only so many people who can afford to buy so many of the \$29 billion, it's raised to 12.78%. Does that make any sense in this day and age?

One of the worst-kept secrets is that Ontario Hydro owes \$29 billion. That's only the amount of money that is guaranteed by the province. On top of it, I see the debt payable to the Canada pension plan investment fund. You know the CPP, when you check your pay stub? Ontario Hydro is in there with both hands to the tune of almost \$2.7 billion. When we looked at the debt structure, because this is a mess indeed, it seemed that a group of at first well-intentioned people, and afterwards very powerful people, has given this fiefdom a halo of sanctity whereby it became impossible for anyone to question or penetrate this society of high priests. It became a closed circle. You saw some of them in the corridor.

Unless you are a physicist, you have no business telling them. You have experienced or read about brownouts. Remember New York state? And then the engineers, for they love to build things, came calling on behalf of Ontario Hydro and said, "Government of the day, better to be 15% over capacity than 0.5% short, and we the engineers, with public money, if you leave us alone, shall build things." Today, as our House leader would say, build they did. Half the debt is the tragedy, the fracas of Darlington. We all should share the blame. But now some grey eminences, some wise people come about and say: "Maybe it's time to do something with Hydro. Maybe we can privatize. Maybe we should have a mix of state and commercial entities."

1730

The Advisory Committee on Competition in Ontario's Electricity System, the Macdonald commission, has estimated — and this comes from the government; we don't invent these things — accurately they say, that a \$15-billion reduction in Hydro's existing debt would be required to restructure Hydro along more commercial lines.

Simply put, if you're to go private, reduce your debt by \$15 billion.

My House leader, Mr Wildman, tells me, "Gilles, don't forget to mention that there's another \$10 billion coming down the pipe." This \$10 billion will have to hit the marketplace in three and a half to four and a half years. It will be competing with other issues. But the minister, who's an engineer, a well-intentioned, pleasant fellow —

**Mr Wildman:** And a lawyer.

**Mr Pouliot:** — and a lawyer to boot, says: "It's guaranteed by the province of Ontario. The bond-rating agencies are telling us that it won't impact on our rating." But the marketplace — he doesn't say this; he's so absorbed — may react differently. What if the issue is badly received? Because it competes with New York state, it competes with the international market. The value of our currency will be a determining factor. No one will say that this issue of \$10 billion will cost you less. The marketplace says to expect at least 12 basis points under ideal conditions. So this will take on extraordinary proportions.

The province's risk to make payments under the guarantee has therefore increased. That's what they're saying: "We're on the hook." It becomes a little tedious now, a little more difficult. People should be getting nervous. Hydro has stated that this does not pose a risk for holders of its bonds and notes. In other words: "If you have a coupon, don't worry if it says 'Ontario Hydro.' It's fully guaranteed by the broad shoulders of the province of Ontario. Don't worry. If we can't pay Ontario Hydro, the taxpayers will be left holding the bag, and they will fork over. They will pay the debentures."

You saw the interest rates; you saw the costs. They're completely independent of the books of the province. Yet we are fully responsible to pay not only the provincial debt, which is more than \$100 billion, accumulated over many, many years and governments, but on top of it comes the \$29-billion Canada pension plan — which is all of us; we have to pay it back — so we're up to \$32 billion; and on top of it, another \$10 billion.

How did we get there? This is scary. I know you to have a family, Speaker. The sons and daughters of every Ontarian will be asked to carry this mismanagement for generations to come. Some will say that, given the massive debt, it does not auger well. It stops them from going to the marketplace. How would you like to buy in, as an entrepreneur, yet face the liability that comes with it?

The sister provinces of Manitoba and Quebec must be salivating. I know in the case of Quebec that their power is 100% generation, 100% hydro, for as long as the river flows, and they're overcapacitated. Yet the government of Ontario does not see, with its false pride, an opportunity to strike a long-term deal or at least a medium-term deal to ensure that we can make a pause, get to the bottom of this. Have the right expertise join members of the committee so people will not be dazzled and mesmerized and then come up after. Give it the time that it deserves so that never again will we be subjected to this kind of uncertainty, to this kind of mismanagement that is finally emerging.

It took a catastrophe to wake people up. People knew there was a malaise that was entrenched at Ontario Hydro, but in order to start looking at a shake-out and say collectively: "Look, a lot needs to be done. We have to go to the very bottom. We have to be innovative once we formulate our solution and our alternatives." Well, sure enough, the good people that we are, we did not hear the many, many alarm bells. We shut the clock off and slept another 10 years and then another 10 years again. This did not happen overnight. This is the result, the culmination of years and years of secrecy, of well-intended yet ill-fated practices at Ontario Hydro. What do we do? We grab the clock. Some at Ontario Hydro will point a finger and blame communication, the lack of this, the lack of that, the state of denial.

I want to wish the committee very well and let me, please, ask the minister to ensure, given the magnitude of the problem, given the importance of electricity, that the committee has the resources to do a job that they wish to do and that needs to be done.

**Mr Wildman:** I want to participate in this debate regarding the government motion as a member of the assembly who has had some considerable time dealing with Ontario Hydro's problems and challenges, and to say that I am prepared as a member of the assembly to accept the government's position that there should be a select committee formed. But I do regret very much that the government has not accepted our advice that an independent commission be established to look into Ontario Hydro: how we got to where we are, particularly vis-à-vis Ontario Hydro nuclear, and where we should go from here.

I've served in this place since 1975 on both sides of the House and I have seen this movie before. The fact is that we've had two select committees in the past. My colleague the former member for York South, who at the time was the dean of the assembly, Donald MacDonald — not the Liberal Donald Macdonald that this government appointed to look into Ontario Hydro — the former member for York South chaired the select committee, and that committee, all of the members from all three parties, worked very, very hard to try to come to grips with the issues at Ontario Hydro and the future of Ontario Hydro. However, we were not able to adequately deal with those issues.

I can remember in 1975, when I first arrived in this august assembly, there were proposals to build another nuclear plant; as a matter of fact, proposals to build a series of nuclear plants around the Great Lakes. The initial proposal was for a plant that was to be called Darlington. The estimate at that time was for \$4 billion to construct Darlington: \$4 billion. It quickly escalated to \$7 billion. Then, when it was finally completed under the Liberal government, it had cost \$14 billion, which is about half of the total debt that is currently owed by Ontario Hydro for one plant that by the time it was built was not needed. I was not a clairvoyant back in 1975, and I wasn't the only person who was saying, "We don't need this plant."

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There were all sorts of arguments about the environmental aspects, and they are important, but that wasn't the

issue that I was raising and that others were raising, particularly back in 1975 when the then Conservative government of Bill Davis was proposing to build this plant. It was the fact that economically it didn't make sense. It has never made sense. It certainly didn't make sense when we finally saw the final figure on the cost of the construction of Darlington.

Yet when we came into government in 1990, the engineers over at Hydro not only had just completed the construction of Darlington, they were proposing to build 17 or 18 more plants at a time when we had a surplus of power. I could say perhaps that there were many people who argued about Darlington on the basis of whether the electricity was going to be needed, but it was obvious by the late 1980s, 1989, that we did indeed have a surplus of power and that the Darlington plant coming on stream was going to exacerbate that situation. Yet they wanted to build 18 more plants because they said: "You can't be sure. We might need it."

My friend from Renfrew North referred to it as the iron-ring disease, and I honestly believe that there were an awful lot of construction engineers at Ontario Hydro who had nothing better to do than design more plants. Unfortunately we had wrong staff, and our government may have contributed to that wrong staff in that we cut the staff of Ontario Hydro by one third on our watch and we froze the rates, because the rates were escalating significantly, largely due to the debt of Darlington coming on.

**Mr Conway:** They got frozen after a 44% increase, as I recall.

**Mr Wildman:** Exactly. There was an enormous escalation and we froze them because we were being told by the major power consumers in the province that, if this continued, Ontario would not be competitive in the North American economy. So we froze Ontario Hydro rates and we cut the staff. There was an argument about whether we had proper staff: Did we have maintenance and operating engineers as opposed to construction and design people? There were an awful lot of construction engineers over there twiddling their thumbs and very angry about what was happening, and saying, "These people don't know what they're doing."

All of this was debated in the former select committees. That's why we believe we should have an independent commission. The former select committees under the previous governments were chaired by an opposition member. This government has chosen — and I have a great deal of respect for the member for High Park-Swansea, my dear Mr Shea, and I do mean that. I'm not being sarcastic when I say that. I have respect for him but I am worried that this may become a committee dominated by the government side, which was not the case of the previous select committee. It was a very independent investigation of Ontario Hydro, but not independent enough in my view, and I don't think that this committee will be as independent as those. But I'll wait to see. We have some very competent members going to serve on that committee, and I hope they do well.

I'm very worried because of this government's propensity to attack the public sector.

**Mr Conway:** Bud, I think I heard a beeper. Isabel, you've been bad.

**Ms Isabel Bassett (St Andrew-St Patrick):** I've been trying to turn it off.

**Mr Wildman:** You're not supposed to bring it in here.

This government says they don't like the public sector, that they don't like anything that is carried out by the public sector. They have the view that anything that is done by government is inherently inefficient and inherently bad, and conversely, anything that is done in the private sector is efficient and profitable and is the best way to go. With that kind of ideology, I hope we haven't already predetermined the results of this committee's considerations.

Since the government has chosen to ignore our proposal for an independent commission, I hope this committee will consider a number of things, because this is a very important work that the committee is about to commence. The fate of Ontario Hydro is critical, as all of us know, for the economy of this province. It's critical for jobs and it's critical for public safety in our province when one considers where a number of these nuclear plants are located and how close they are to population centres in southern Ontario.

We have the question of the debt and we have the enormous investment that has been made since Sir Adam Beck by the people of Ontario in this institution of Ontario Hydro and in the capital assets of that company. We have to ensure that Ontario has access to clean, affordable and reliable electricity if we're going to be a competitive marketplace. That's why we think there is so much public interest at stake that we shouldn't be following the route simply of a select committee. But if that's the way the government intends to do it, it's imperative that the committee know that all the issues related to nuclear safety and environmental protection are properly addressed, as well as the issues around costs and debt and assets that must be dealt with.

The committee must be able to investigate the economic, environmental and safety issues that led Ontario Hydro in August to decide to lay up seven reactors and embark on this multimillion-dollar restructuring plan. The committee has to be able to have the staff and the research capability to properly examine Hydro's multimillion-dollar recovery plan to determine whether it is economical, whether it is the most environmentally friendly, whether it is safe and whether it will ensure a reliable power supply or whatever other alternatives might be used within the framework of public power.

This is an enormous challenge for the members of the committee. The committee must have research staff. I believe it must have legal staff. It must have the right to subpoena witnesses and documents. It must have the right to cross-examine witnesses under oath. It must have a budget which will make it possible for those things to be done. It has to have adequate staff to review the existing literature and brief the members of the committee, to

interrogate witnesses and to do research. That's going to take time as well as money, and that's why I am very concerned about the time frame that is being proposed by the government for this committee. The suggestion that the committee will produce an interim report in 17 days I believe is bizarre. It's imperative that this committee not be forced into making hasty conclusions; it must have a reasonable time frame.

The first stage of the committee's work must deal with the events that led up to the unveiling of Ontario Hydro's recovery plan which was announced last month. The committee must hold hearings, and we think it will probably take at least until the end of the year for adequate work to be done, with an interim report early in the new year.

1750

The second stage of the committee's work will have to be the examination of the government's white paper. The committee will have to hold hearings which should finish I guess halfway through the year. I know the Chair of the committee should be very concerned about the time frame that is being proposed, as well as other members of the committee. I believe it's important that this work be done in the context of Ontario Hydro not making long-term commitments for replacement power, capital replacement or new generating facilities until the committee has reported.

The central issue for the committee's work must be the proposed recovery plan. Initially, Mr Farlinger said that the recovery plan would cost about \$6.5 billion to \$8.8 billion. Within a couple of weeks, that figure had escalated by \$1.5 billion. I hate to sound cynical, but whenever I'm dealing with Hydro, I say, "What else is new?" when you start getting these big numbers. Everything with Ontario Hydro is a mega-project.

On top of these costs there is an estimated cost of \$3 billion for decommissioning if a decision is made to actually leave one of the plants closed, or more than one. Nobody really knows what the cost of decommissioning is, but their estimate is around \$3 billion. We all know, as consumers of electricity in the province, that we're all going to pay one way or the other. If the government maintains its position that electricity rates should not escalate, then that means they are simply going to be delaying paying down the Hydro debt. If the length of time it's going to take to pay down the debt is longer, then obviously ratepayers are going to be paying more interest. We're all going to pay one way or the other.

The legislative committee is going to have to do independent research into these issues: questions around retooling of the nuclear plants. Is this the best or most cost-efficient solution? Will we be throwing good money after bad? How much will it take to restore the plants to a good, reliable state? What about environmental issues? How clean can fossil plants be made? What are the alternatives in terms of purchasing power from outside the province or avoiding future capital costs through conservation and the use of non-utility generation, whether in a regime of competition or otherwise?

What about the impact on jobs in communities that are dependent on these plants? What about the impact on jobs in the private sector, in plants, industries, businesses that are dependent on good, cheap, reliable power? Will the cost of retooling nuclear plants keep jobs in the province that would otherwise have gone elsewhere? There are all questions the committee will have to address and they are not going to be easily answered.

I have a major question which I believe the committee must deal with: How is it that only a couple of weeks prior to the president of Ontario Hydro and the board making public this damning report on Ontario Hydro nuclear, Mr Andognini, the author of that report, was appearing before the federal regulator, the AECB, arguing for a five-year renewal of their licence? If things were as bad as his report indicated, how is it that he could argue before the federal regulator only a couple of weeks later that they should have a renewal of their licence for five years?

I suspect there were political decisions made in between those two events, political decisions where it was decided that there needed to be a damning report made on Ontario Hydro, that the credibility of Ontario Hydro, which has been damaged for good reason, should be damaged even further so that this government could carry forward on its privatization agenda.

I think these are questions that must be answered. That's why we need to have a good time line, that's why we need to answer these questions and that's why we need the white paper.

**Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener):** Come on, 17 days is more than enough to do that.

**Mr Wildman:** This guy has no idea of how complex these questions are. Here are some questions that have to be —

**Mr Wettlaufer:** I come from a business environment where we didn't need that much time.

**The Acting Speaker:** Order.

**Mr Wildman:** Is it possible to refurbish the Pickering and Bruce nuclear plants and retain their workforces so that they run reliably? You're not going to answer those questions in a real short time.

The Andognini report's brief section on hardware and design states, "Plant hardware, including equipment and materials, for the most part is adequately reliable." Is that a reliable statement? AECB thinks it is.

How do we get to where we are now? How is it that previous governments let the cost of Darlington grow from \$4 billion to \$14 billion? How has the projected performance of Hydro's nuclear stations compared with actual performance? What evidence has Hydro provided to the Atomic Energy Control Board to support the renewal of its nuclear licences, and was this evidence consistent with the findings of the Andognini task force, considering that Mr

Andognini was the one who made the argument to the AECB? These are not simple questions and they're going to take a good deal of time and expertise to answer, expertise that the individual members of the committee obviously don't have and couldn't have.

What are the costs and technical difficulties of decommissioning? What are the costs and technical difficulties of dealing with nuclear waste disposal? These are issues that have been hanging over Ontario Hydro for the last 20 or 30 years and have not yet been answered.

What are the economic consequences going to be if the government, with its white paper, in response to the Macdonald report, advocates not only open competition but a big dose of privatization? If it deals with privatization, will the \$2 billion being spent on human resources wind up being stranded investment if the plants become uncompetitive?

Hydro proposes to spend, as we said, up to \$8.8 billion or perhaps \$10 billion on its so-called nuclear asset optimization plan. There needs to be a thorough examination of the economics of this approach as opposed to the alternatives.

Here are very difficult questions: Hydro expresses optimism about returning the Bruce A and Pickering A to service. Hydro needs to share its assumptions with the cost of power from these two stations compared to alternative sources under a regime of competition. I think this is significant because the cost of the recovery plan has escalated substantially, perhaps to \$10 billion, and one of the reasons for that, the minister has said, is changes in assumptions in only a couple of weeks — \$1.5 billion in escalated cost in only a couple of weeks.

What is the best way of ensuring that competition brings environmental benefits? How much stranded debt will there be and how will stranded assets charges work in practice? What measures can be taken to ensure that any benefits of competition in the form of lower prices are shared equally among consumers, that is, residential consumers as well as industrial and commercial consumers, no matter where they are in the province, north, rural, as well as urban? This is of significant importance to residents of northern Ontario. It's of significant importance to the farmers of this province, particularly dairy farmers and people who use a lot of electricity. They already pay, in rural and northern Ontario, 15% more than their urban friends. If competition lowers rates for some, it must lower rates for all. Will competition provide opportunities for Ontario entrepreneurs and communities, or will it mainly mean more business for American multinational utilities?

**The Acting Speaker:** It being 6 of the clock, this House will stand adjourned until 6:30 tonight.

*The House adjourned at 1800.*

*Evening sitting reported in volume B.*

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**Legislative Assembly  
of Ontario**

First Session, 36<sup>th</sup> Parliament

**Assemblée législative  
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 36<sup>e</sup> législature

**Official Report  
of Debates  
(Hansard)**

**Journal  
des débats  
(Hansard)**

**Monday 15 September 1997**

**Lundi 15 septembre 1997**



Speaker  
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Président  
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

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# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 15 September 1997

# ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 15 septembre 1997

*The House met at 1830.*

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### UNIFORM FEDERAL AND PROVINCIAL CHILD SUPPORT GUIDELINES ACT, 1997

### LOI DE 1997 SUR L'HARMONISATION DES LIGNES DIRECTRICES FÉDÉRALES ET PROVINCIALES SUR LES ALIMENTS POUR LES ENFANTS

Resuming the adjourned debate on the motion for second reading of Bill 128, An Act to amend the Family Law Act to provide for child support guidelines and to promote uniformity between orders for the support of children under the Divorce Act (Canada) and orders for the support of children under the Family Law Act / Projet de loi 128, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le droit de la famille pour prévoir des lignes directrices sur les aliments pour les enfants et pour promouvoir l'harmonisation entre les ordonnances alimentaires au profit des enfants rendues en vertu de la Loi sur le divorce (Canada) et celles rendues en vertu de la Loi sur le droit de la famille.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson):** The Chair recognizes the member for Kingston and The Islands.

**Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands):** Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to continue the debate that I got involved in the last time when this bill was before the House. Of course, the first thing that ought to be noted — and the people of Ontario and indeed the people in the galleries here should be aware of the fact — is that we have now started a new sessional day. The last sessional day ended at 6 o'clock this evening and we have now started a new sessional day for the next three hours, under the new rules this government has brought in.

I'm sure the average person might say, "What's so significant about that?" The significance is the fact that in a sessional day normally there are routine proceedings and there's an item on the agenda called question period which allows the opposition of the day, and indeed government backbench members as well, to question the executive council, to question the cabinet, to question the government of the day on its activities on a day-to-day basis. That we don't have tonight because we immediately go into orders of the day. We don't have question period, so that really one of the hallmarks of democracy, the fact

that we can hold the government accountable for its day-to-day actions by asking questions in this House, is not being adhered to.

We're now in the third week of doing this. Last week we did it for two nights, and two nights the week before. Now for the third week we do not have a question period when orders of the day have been called or when a new sessional day has started.

**Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener):** What is the hallmark of democracy, John? Make up your mind.

**Mr Gerretsen:** I hear my friend from Kitchener making all sorts of catcalls, but the fact still is that as a result of the actions this government has undertaken in bringing in the new rules that are now in place, it has really once again injured democracy. We cannot call the government to account for its day-to-day activities, which is a real shame.

Let's deal with this particular bill. I'm very pleased to see the Attorney General in the House today, because I'm sure he would like to see this bill passed as quickly as possible. I agree with the contents of this bill. This is a bill that needs to be passed, because it will provide some uniformity in support orders and it will give those people who are involved in this a much clearer idea as to what they can expect when they take these matters before a judge in court.

However, as you and I well know, it is not in the letter of the law, it is not in the way particular bills are framed or brought before this House and passed that the matter ends. It is in the administration, how the bills are actually administered on a day-to-day basis and how they affect the people in Ontario, that you can really see whether or not a law or an act actually works. When it comes to that matter, when it comes to those kinds of issues relating to support matters in Ontario, we know quite well that this government, and indeed the Attorney General's office, has been a complete and utter failure.

I'm glad to see that he's here today, because I would just remind him of the day when he said in this House: "We're doing quite well. We're actually returning 50% of the phone calls that we get into the department." I reminded him then, as I'm reminding him now, that if you were really in business — and you like to pride yourself about doing things in a businesslike fashion because you are the business government — if you only returned 50% of your phone calls, you wouldn't be in business very long. You certainly would want a much higher satisfaction level than that.

I would say that by its own words this government has failed those people of Ontario who are relying on this kind of legislation. The women and children, the most vulnerable in our society who require the month-to-month support payments, are simply not getting them because all the regional offices were closed. It's all been collected here in Toronto now and it's all being done out of one particular office here in Toronto, and so far it hasn't worked.

I can tell you that I had one of my constituency office workers do a little survey of how many cases in just my office alone, in Kingston and The Islands, we have heard about or are dealing with in one way or another. Currently in our office we've got 250 ongoing cases where people know that money has been paid into the plan and it hasn't been paid out to the women and children who are the recipients of the support orders — 250 in just one riding in Ontario, and I don't think my riding is that much different from most of the other ridings in this province. When you consider the fact that there are 130 ridings in this province and you multiply that times 250 problem situations, you come up to a number of over 20,000, and those are only the cases we've heard about. What about all of those people who have got these problems on an ongoing basis that we in our constituency offices don't hear about? It simply isn't good enough.

That's the biggest fear we have. The biggest fear we have once we implement and pass this piece of legislation, which we support, is whether it will in effect be administered in a proper and adequate manner so that the people who are relying on the terms of this bill to get their payments on an ongoing basis will in fact get them. For that I hold the Attorney General and senior officials in his department responsible, and I'm sure I'm not the only one. I know I'm not the only one because we have heard in this House on a day-to-day basis horror stories where money has been paid in and it hasn't been paid out on the other side.

When you talk to some of the staff people in this department, I understand that about 190 people are involved to answer the phones and to deal with the collection and distribution of the money that has been collected through the plan in this office, and it takes more than two weeks just for the completion of requests for financial adjustments. I understand that the clients we're dealing with rarely get through on the phone system and never receive a written response from the family support plan people. When financial statements are sent to the payor or recipients, they are computer printouts without any explanations and therefore both parties don't understand what the office is doing. Those are just some of the problems we deal with. It is not the fact that this law should be passed, but we in this chamber ought to be just as concerned to make sure there are adequate measures in place to make sure whatever laws we pass are administered in a fair and adequate manner.

Let me just give you a couple of examples, and I won't use any names because I'm sure these people would want to have their names withheld from this. For example, in

one case that we heard about in our office there's \$4,000 in arrears and the FRO has lost two court documents regarding that particular case. They just lost them. I don't know whether they got lost between the time when the regional offices were closed down and everything was shipped here to the new central agency that's been set up in Downsview, but the orders were lost and as a result nobody was enforcing them. As a matter of fact, our office had to fax a copy of the court orders to attempt to ensure implementation of increases. It took six months to implement the first order, and the most recent order has yet to be implemented or enforced.

#### 1840

The result of all that, of course, is that the mainly women and children who are relying on these monthly support payments that have been received from the other spouse are not getting the money as quickly as they are entitled to get it and as quickly as they need it.

I'll just read you a copy of a letter that was sent by an individual to the Attorney General. She states:

"I am writing with regards to the delay in processing of support payments through the family support plan.

"Up until the last few months, my monthly payments of \$400 were somewhat regular (although always one month in arrears) and I could usually count on receiving the payment within the first week of the month." I assume she meant by that a month late. "Since the closing of the regional family support plan offices, these payments have all but stopped. I received one payment on October 3, 1996, and didn't get another until December 12, 1996, and again on January 9, 1997, each for \$400. As of today's date" — this letter was written about six months ago — "my account is still in arrears \$1,146.31.

"Countless phone calls to 'The Plan' have been made with little or no results and most often just a busy signal. I have contacted the local MPP's office as well as Ombudsman Ontario. It has been determined that regular payments from my ex-spouse have been made through Correctional Services Canada. Where the money has gone from there is anybody's guess.

"What has happened to the plan that was supposed to help get us our child support payments? I know I am only one of thousands of people affected by this serious problem. Where is the money that rightfully belongs to us and has been paid to 'The Plan' on our behalf? Why is no one doing anything to help resolve this? What do we have to do to make someone sit up and take notice?

"I am looking forward to your help in resolving this very frustrating situation."

Then she gives her phone number etc.

I think that's a deplorable situation. A system that was set up, in effect, to ensure that people were getting the adequate support payments from their spouse or ex-spouse simply isn't working or is made a lot worse. I would plead with the Attorney General that once this becomes law, he get all the staff people together and try to sort out the mess once and for all. Let the only criterion be that as soon as the money comes in, then it goes out. I would even say that

a two-week delay is too long. Most businesses wouldn't accept a two-week delay in a payment being forwarded.

**Interjection:** Some would.

**Mr Gerretsen:** The member says some would. I suggest to you that in situations like this where people are depending on this money, you want to make sure they get it as quickly as possible. They are totally dependent on these funds and this is much more than just a business transaction. Presumably these bills were passed to ensure that people who found themselves in these kinds of situations would be helped quicker than they were in the past.

There is so much one could say about this situation, and I certainly don't want to prolong the discussion. However, there is just one other issue that I wish to raise very quickly, and it is very closely tied in with the bill we are dealing with here today, and that deals with the amount of money the government of Ontario is actually spending for children's services. The Minister of Community and Social Services is here this evening, and undoubtedly if my figures are incorrect, she will correct me, because I do make mistakes from time to time. I'll be the first to admit that, and I would hope that sometimes the government would admit as well that maybe it has made mistakes from time to time.

I heard her say in the House here today that they are actually spending more money on children's services than before. I am looking at the Ministry of Community and Social Services adult and children's services program — these are the estimates documents — and when I look at the figures as to what was spent in 1995-96 and I see, for example, in a category like child and family intervention services the sum of \$199 million being spent, and in 1996-97 it is \$189 million, that is a reduction of \$10 million in a rather substantial department of the government.

Some people might say that's a good thing, and quite frankly, just from this line item, I don't know exactly where the money was taken from, but what it clearly shows to me is that certainly we are not spending more money for children's services in this province, we're spending less money. Let the government at least have the decency and the honesty to stand up and say, "Yes, we are spending less money, and we're doing that for this, that or the other reason," whatever reason they feel is appropriate. But don't come in here and say, "We're spending more money," when the actual numbers in your own government documents completely refute that.

As always, it's been a privilege and a pleasure to add my comments to this proposed bill. We certainly will be supporting it, we think it's a good bill, but I once again ask the Attorney General just to make sure that this bill is administered in a fair, efficient and correct fashion.

**The Acting Speaker:** Comments and questions?

**Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York):** I just want to remind the audience watching that this is not a repeat program; we are on live. My friend Peter Kormos, the member for Welland-Thorold, will be on next to speak to this issue, and I will follow him after that, so there is plenty to say on this particular bill.

Briefly, as a comment to what the member for Kingston and The Islands said, I support much of what he said, particularly around issues of enforcement and worries about whether we have the administrative capacity to deal with incoming problems we are likely to face. The minister admits there are going to be thousands of variations that we are likely to expect. I am worried, given that this government is firing the entire civil service, that there is not going to be anybody left to deal with any of the issues, let alone his 10-point plan around enforcement.

When you have an enforcement scheme, you're going to need people to enforce that. These guys are getting rid of everybody in the civil service because they say, "This is a bad place, nobody works, so we've got to fire them to make the system better." How these people can make the system better by cutting, I can't tell you. These guys talk about enforcement, but there is nobody there to enforce it, so I'm worried about what this government is doing. If there are going to be I'm not sure how many possible variation applications — I think he talked about 700,000 — we've got a problem. Does he have the capacity to deal with that? He should speak to that. We are worried, and people who receive support for themselves and their children should be worried. We need to hold these people accountable as they cut with the big, heavy scissors.

1850

**Mr Alex Cullen (Ottawa West):** In responding to the comments that have been made with respect to this bill, I have to tell this House that while campaigning in the Ottawa West by-election I ran into case after case of single parents who are dependent upon the family support program for their payments. These are women, single parents having to meet the mortgage, having to try and have funds to send their children to school. Unfortunately, the program is failing them.

We may be talking here of trying to improve the situation, but when the government introduces legislation like this but does not provide sufficient resources to ensure that the principle behind this legislation is being met, then you have to ask what kind of gesture is being made today when there are families who are dependent upon these payments, the payments are being made by the spouse involved, the ex-spouse has made the payments to the agency so the money is in the bank, in the government's hands, so to speak, but these payments are not getting to the recipients in time. You have to wonder how is it that the government can introduce legislation like this while at the same time not provide sufficient resources to ensure that the people the system is supposed to benefit will in fact get the money.

Speaking at the door to these women, I found that they found themselves in positions where they would have to tell their children: "No we cannot pay for this. No, you cannot take your lesson this week. No, we can't afford to pay for this because the cheque hasn't come in." We don't have the money." These are real-life, breathing examples.

I would suggest to the government that they should be paying attention to this. It's fine to introduce such legislation, but if they don't prepare the wherewithal to ensure

that these objectives are being met, then they are indeed empty words.

**Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie):** Like my colleagues who have just spoken, I have to speak along the same vein. We have a piece of legislation here that's obviously good material, a process that will work if it's put in place and administered properly.

But over the years we've seen governments take good legislation, take good ideas — particularly ideas stolen from New Democrats over the years, like Tommy Douglas and David Lewis, legislation that would actually work for people —

*Interjections.*

**Mr Martin:** No, it's true. Both Liberals and Conservatives take good ideas from New Democrats, developed through a grass-roots process, and put them into legislation simply to win elections or to win or curry favour with the public. Then once you put it in place, it disappears into this big black hole. The people who are the target of that legislation, who were supposed to benefit from that legislation, don't in fact benefit from it. We've seen that happen over the years. We know that some of the systems that are in place now, that are supposed to work for people, don't work for people. It is not that they weren't right in the first place, that they weren't the right idea or weren't heading in the right direction; it's just that the administration of the day didn't really believe in it, didn't really believe in the central tenet of that piece of legislation.

The legislation we have in front of us today that we're talking about is about looking after children. It's about making sure that parents who have the responsibility to pay for the needs of children have the resources necessary to do that. That's like motherhood. Who wouldn't agree with that? And who wouldn't agree with a system that would make it easier to do that, make it better to do that?

The only thing is the short history that we have with the present government, some two and a half years that they've been in government —

**Mr Gerretsen:** It's too long, way too long.

**Mr Martin:** Way too long, but the damage they've done in those two and a half years is unbelievable and they'll do it again here.

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** I am interested in asking the member for Kingston and The Islands, despite the claims of my friend the Attorney General that the process has indeed been streamlined, whether the family support calls are indeed not necessarily the majority but the plurality of the calls that he gets at his constituency office from various constituents.

It's very difficult, because we all agree that we need a process whereby as quickly as possible the money can get to the spouse who requires it to look after the children, but my experience has been, I should share with him, that despite the efforts of staff of the Ministry of the Attorney General to be helpful to us — and they do make those efforts — it is still a real challenge to be able to get the money to the spouse.

Interestingly enough — this is inadvertent — it has actually brought some warring spouses together because

one spouse will say, "I'm supposed to be getting the money." The other spouse, the person paying the money, will say, "I'm paying and here's the proof." But the money isn't getting to the spouse who requires it to look after the children. So what we get are letters and telephone calls and visits to the constituency office of both spouses, who may not have a lot in common with one another at that point in time except their annoyance with the Ministry of the Attorney General for not being able to have the money delivered appropriately. I say that while I am sure everyone will agree with this bill, we still want the system fixed so that people will get the money in a timely fashion.

**The Acting Speaker:** The member for Kingston and The Islands has two minutes to respond.

**Mr Gerretsen:** I'd like to thank the members for Ottawa West, St Catharines, Fort York and Sault Ste Marie for commenting on my speech. I find it rather surprising that none of the government members, including the ministers who are in the House, tried to refute some of the things I was saying. I can only assume that they agree with the content, that what I said about the children's services budget and what's happening in the family support system is actually happening.

I would just like to take a moment as well to welcome to the House once again at least two of the new members who were recently elected in the by-election. Particularly for those people who may have missed it this afternoon while they were at work and are tuning in now, we have with us tonight the new member for Ottawa West, Alex Cullen, and also the new member for Oriole, David Caplan. In all fairness, I am sure that the new member from Windsor, Mr Lessard, isn't far away. He's coming in momentarily now.

I am sure these new members will quickly realize how important debate on topics like this is in this House. We've already talked about the new rules, how we're not having a question period, but they will also realize that it's one thing to pass laws but something quite different to make sure they are administered in a fair, open, complete and efficient manner. That's really what's lacking with respect to the family support system right now.

Once again, I would say to the people of Ontario, yes, we are now in a new sessional day, but unfortunately from now on when we have these sessional days at night there will not be a question period, which is the hallmark of a democracy, which gives the opportunity for the opposition to make the government accountable. That's being denied to us.

**The Acting Speaker:** Further debate?

**Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold):** Firstly, let me join others in the House who have recognized today the three new members who have joined us, marched in to take their seats, elected in by-elections: the member for Ottawa West, the member for Oriole and, of course, the member for Windsor-Riverside. I extend my congratulations to them, along with others. I have some affinity, as you may know, with persons elected in by-elections and I wish them all well.

I also want to thank my colleague from London Centre for doing the leadoff last Wednesday. I appreciate her having accommodated me. I was down in Welland. We were opening up the 145th Welland county fair, the Niagara Region Exhibition, the Niagara Region Agricultural Society.

I met later that day up at the plumbers' hall up at Black Horse Corner with OPSEU workers from across Niagara, from all sectors: health care, education, municipal workers.

**Mr Marchese:** They're worried, I bet.

**Mr Kormos:** Not just worried, but becoming more and more educated about Bill 136 and developing strategies that are designed not just to stop Bill 136 but to oust this government and ensure that a government of its ilk will have a hard, hard time ever finding its way, a government that is so anti-worker, that holds workers in such disdain, that wants to promote an economy of lower and lower wages. These people know it. The women and men I met with at the plumbers hall on Wednesday night know it. They're going to be talking to their friends and their neighbours and their relatives about it. They're going to be talking to others in their workplaces about it.

They also know that Bill 136 doesn't stand alone. It's remarkable how many working people and their friends have identified the relationship between Bill 136 and, by God, Bill 26. There's a direct relationship. Bill 26 was very much the cornerstone of the radical attack on workers, working women and men, on their parents, retirees, their kids who want to be students.

I suppose nothing characterizes the depth of cruelty that this government can descend to than its attack on women and kids, an attack led by the Attorney General. When we talk about Bill 128 — and I join my colleagues in the New Democratic Party and colleagues in the Liberal Party in indicating that of course we're going to be supporting Bill 128. Bill 128 is an application to Ontario of what have now for a few years been the support guidelines adopted by the federal government and utilized in federal proceedings.

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The public responds with applause to Bill 128. Mind you, some Family Court judges I understand have informally been using the federal guidelines, but this will codify it and require them to do that.

Indeed, last Thursday, one of Ontario's leading family law lawyers, Pamela Walker in Niagara Falls hosted a seminar along with Earle Blackadder, another prominent family litigator in Niagara, with a strong audience response, explaining the impact of Bill 1128 and what it means.

The spectre that shadows all of this is the incompetence of this government and most specifically its Attorney General — his total inability to exercise even some of the most basic powers that are entrusted to him as Attorney General of this province. Don't take it from me, take it from the thousands and thousands and thousands of women and their kids who have been victims, who have

been brutalized by this Attorney General's conscious mismanagement of the family support plan.

Because you see, at the end of the day Bill 128 isn't worth the paper it's written on if this government continues to simply not care whether or not moms and their kids — in the majority of cases moms, in some cases dads who are the custodial parent — this bill doesn't mean a tinker's dam unless this government's going to get serious and accept its responsibilities and until this Attorney General is replaced by somebody who has a modest level of competence and skill and capacity to lead his ministry.

Look at what they've done with the Family Responsibility Office, as they've renamed it under Bill 82. All the support orders in the world mean nothing unless there's effective enforcement. We know what happened last fall when the Attorney General shut down eight regional offices, dismissed some 290 qualified, and in the vast majority of cases long-term, experienced, staff, and then on a daily basis, in response to questions, concerns being raised in this Legislature by members of this caucus during question period about the status of the family support plan, that Attorney General persisted in saying: "Oh, everything's in order and fine and it's a go, guys. We've consolidated all these eight regional offices up in Downsview. Jeez, I don't dispute the fact that you've brought up yet another incident, but it must be a computer glitch. Surely it's a rarity."

It was increasingly becoming the norm, because it was only in November after weeks and months of hearing that from the Attorney General that video tape displayed oh so vividly what in fact wasn't going on at his Downsview office: three floors of haphazard storage, that's it; nothing in working order; boxes upon boxes upon boxes of confidential files for FSP recipients — these are women and their kids — left in publicly accessible hallways with no security; conditions in total disarray, literally, as we know now in hindsight, months away from even being close to operational.

Oh, and the squealing and stammering and yammering that went on.

**Mr Marchese:** And blaming everybody else too.

**Mr Kormos:** As my friend from Fort York says, blaming everybody but themselves, because that's where the responsibility rests.

You should have been with me the other day in estimates for the Attorney General, Speaker. Shelley Martel, the member for Sudbury East, was there too. The Attorney General was trying to answer questions. It was the most pathetic display of his ignorance about his office that any Attorney General surely has ever come close to demonstrating. The most basic questions were not to be answered by this Attorney General, be they questions about the family support plan and its history of this Attorney General's mismanagement or be they questions about his concerns about the Young Offenders Act. I wanted to know. I said: "Attorney General, tell us what sections cause you the concern. The public would like to know."

I haven't seen the Hansard yet because the pressure that the Queen's Park staff are under now means the

committee — well, they are. They have been under attack too, because committee Hansards have been delayed somewhat.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** Hansard staff are excellent.

**Mr Kormos:** Again, I have no criticism of the Hansard staff, but if they do a verbatim recording of the response by the Attorney General, I'll advise them that "hunh" is spelled h-u-n-h, because as often as not that was the response by this Attorney General to very specific questions about specific issues that he raised in his introductory comments to the six or seven hours of estimates. There were as many "hunhs" when it came to questions about his mismanagement of the family support plan as there were about virtually every other area of his ministry.

I wanted to ask the Attorney General very specifically about Bill 82, because those were his 10 tough tools to enforce those support orders. You remember that? By God, he was going to put teeth into the Family Responsibility Office. So 10 months later, just a couple of months short of a year, not a single dollar has been collected by this government as a result of his 10 tough tools in Bill 82 — not a penny — and the same stammering and yammering and blaming about his own mismanagement of his own ministry and their failure to implement even one of the enforcement tools.

"Of course, Bill 82 should have been passed earlier." Gosh, I can't quarrel with that, but the fact is it was this minister who, with the support of the opposition parties — they voted for it, they supported it — at the end of the day spent 10 months not implementing a single section that provides any one of these so-called 10 tough tools. It's not very impressive to the young mother — she knows who I'm talking about — with her two teenage sons, one 13 and one 15. She came into my office just a week ago with the Ontario Court (General Division) order — some people here are more familiar with civil law, but this is a higher court — \$18,000 in arrears and not a penny collected under this Attorney General's dare I call it leadership of his ministry? This is a young woman doing her best.

I tell you, down in Niagara we have one of the highest unemployment levels in all of Ontario. She's struggling along working some 25 hours a week doing telemarketing. You know what that is. "Telemarketing" is a fancy name for doing telephone sales. It's tough work and it's not well paid. She's supplementing that, as she's entitled to, with some Family Benefits Act assistance. But Lord knows, she doesn't want to be on FBA, and if this government had started enforcing, utilizing some of the so-called tools in Bill 82, I'm confident she'd be a lot closer to having the moneys that are due her paid to her — not her but her children.

The Attorney General talked a big game about suspending drivers' licences, "Oh yes, we're going to suspend drivers' licenses." I acknowledge that's a pretty persuasive tool, but shy of 10 months later still we haven't seen any drivers' licences suspended.

1910

**Mr Marchese:** What's taking them so long, Peter? What do you think it is? Why aren't they doing anything?

**Mr Kormos:** The question put to me is, "What's taking them so long?" That was the question I put to the Attorney General, "What's taking you so long?" Attorney General, if it's the problems linking up your computers with the Ministry of Transportation, what about some of the things that don't require computers?

What about the 10th tough enforcement tool, which was the screening of appointments to boards, agencies and commissions to determine whether or not they were debtors, in arrears? I appreciate that in the total scheme of things there weren't a whole lot, but that proves the point. That's a relatively easy proposition. Not one of those persons has been screened in 10 months since the implementation of Bill 82. That doesn't require computer hookups and modems and all that sort of software and programming. It simply requires a political will and a sufficient interest in the welfare of women and kids in this province to make sure it's done, to call the appointments office and say Bill 82 is there and every appointment that's proposed for the approval of cabinet has got to be identified to the Family Responsibility Office. It's not a difficult exercise and yet it seems a little too onerous an exercise for this particular Attorney General. He was so full of himself, talking about that tough tool.

He was going to make sure that OLC lottery winners of over \$1,000 were screened so that nobody grabbed the loot when they owed their wife and kids money through the FSP, family support plan — again, not a difficult exercise. At the end of the day, there just aren't that many big-money lottery winners. You know it as well as I do. We've learned that over our lifetime, a buck at a time we've learned it. There just aren't that many big lottery winners. It doesn't require major computer hookups, just political will. Yet notwithstanding that the Attorney General got Bill 82 passed back in 1996, not a single lottery winner has been checked against the debtors' list at the family support plan. I tell you, not a difficult exercise, but obviously one that's far too onerous, far too challenging for this Attorney General. Not a penny of arrears has been collected pursuant to Bill 82 since its passage, and we're getting close to the point where I can say darned near a year ago now.

My colleague from London Centre made a point, and I want to echo it in the few minutes I've got left, of talking about the fact that the Attorney General had better realize, because if he doesn't realize it she's telling him now, as she told him then, that Bill 128 is going to generate a whole lot of court activity in terms of people seeking variances. In other words, payors of support who are paying in excess of the guidelines are going to be inevitably there — not all of them — seeking variances of their support responsibilities to meet the guidelines, and recipients are of course going to be seeking variances so that the support payments being paid to them are increased to meet the guidelines. Talk about generating a plethora of activity in our family and General Division courts. Yet not one

signal from this Attorney General that there's been any preparation in anticipation of that increased workload that an already overworked public sector court staff across the province in family courts, provincial courts and General Division courts across the board are already facing.

Bill 128 is all about kids. It's about kids who don't have to be poor, but who are; it's about kids who don't have to do without and shouldn't, but they do; and it's about making sure that there's some uniformity and some guidelines for judges, and some fairness. It's the evolution of a long history. There are others here, because of their backgrounds, who are more familiar with the history of litigation and judicial leadership that developed certain standards or rough standards. But my fear and my concern is that this government continues to drag its feet, not just to evade and avoid its responsibilities. By God, it's abdicated its responsibilities to women and kids in this province.

Witness the family support plan, the undeniable incompetence attached to this Attorney General's complete bungling of the family support plan/Family Responsibility Office. I tell you, I continue to have great fears, I continue to feel great sadness and despair for the future of so many kids and their moms, notwithstanding Bill 128, because this government has turned its back on them for a good chunk of time now and shows no signs of changing its ways — none whatsoever. Those kids deserve better, those moms deserve better; I tell you, the people of Ontario deserve better. I'm confident that they'll make sure they get better.

**The Acting Speaker:** Comments and questions?

**Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South):** It is difficult sometimes in this place to listen to some people speak. It was particularly difficult to listen to the member for Welland-Thorold for the last 20 minutes, because he accused the Attorney General of being — “so full of himself” were the words that he used. I find that particularly interesting coming from this member who is so self-righteous on so many subjects when he speaks in this place. It's very curious, almost, on this particular subject because, of course, if anyone knows all about the family support plan office, I would suggest that perhaps this member does and knows far more about the family support plan office than I do. I have not visited it.

I would say to him that it's so typical of their party to stand in this chamber and rant and rave and personally attack a minister. As a member of the government, I don't mind when our policies are being attacked.

*Interjections.*

**Mrs Marland:** Attorney General, I can't concentrate with you talking.

I don't mind our policies being criticized.

*Interjections.*

**Mrs Marland:** No, it's not that I want him to listen; it's just that it's hard for me to speak with the two of them speaking.

Frankly, when it comes to attacking the minister personally in any one of our cabinet portfolios, I take strong exception to it, and that's what this member just did.

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**Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William):** I am happy to add a few words to this debate. I think, as the member for Welland-Thorold has said — at least as I believe the member for Welland-Thorold said — that like Bill 82 this can be seen as another small step in trying to deal with the very real concerns of getting family support payments into the hands of women and children, and any small step forward is a step that we want to support. I find this a particularly interesting one because it follows the lead of the federal government. It must be particularly galling for a government that likes to blame everything it does on somebody else, including the federal government on an almost daily basis, to actually have to follow the federal lead to do one small, positive thing for women and children in this province.

The member for Welland-Thorold raises the very legitimate concern, the same concern that we raised when Bill 82 was being debated, the same concern that he reiterated again tonight about Bill 82, which still stands and will still stand when we look at how well Bill 128 has been enforced, and that's, does either of these bills really result in more money getting to the families, and particularly to the children, who need that kind of support? I would suggest there's little in this bill that gives us reason to be optimistic that it is actually going to result in dollars getting to women and children who need them.

The reason I am particularly pessimistic is because, as the member has mentioned — and I think he referred to his colleague; I know others of mine have mentioned it — this puts a very heavy emphasis on getting into the court system, on being able to get injustices addressed through the court system. We know that access to the court system requires some legal support. We know changes to the legal aid plan have left women without any access to legal aid in cases of domestic concerns. We know for a fact that over 80% of women who need access to the courts to deal with domestic issues can't get legal aid, and for that reason, Mr Attorney General, you won't go far with Bill 128.

**Mr Marchese:** I realize that whenever we offend some of the government members there is always someone standing up to defend them. I appreciate that and I appreciate the fact that the member for Mississauga South calls the comments of my colleague from Welland-Thorold “ranting and raving.” I appreciate the fact that they would do that. I call them passionate concerns that are raised by a member who has taken this issue to the heart, very actively and passionately debating an issue that touches many women and children. They consider that to be ranting and raving.

We have to leave that to the public. We take into account what the member for Mississauga South said as we disagree with her. I have to tell you the only point of disagreement I have with my colleague is that he blames solely the Attorney General for this. I blame the entire government, because they are all responsible, from the Premier to the cabinet ministers to all the colleagues. It's a government initiative we're talking about, of which this

minister is an instrument. So when we attack a member, I attack the entire government and all of its policies.

This government is so burdened with its desire to whack all Ontarians, with its desire to smash all the services that support vulnerable people, with its desire to fire thousands and thousands of workers who work in our ministry offices, so concerned with that that it doesn't know how to do the right thing. The pace with which it does things does not allow this government to do the reasonable thing. That's why we worry. My friend from Welland-Thorold talks about their inability to enforce what they have passed and Bill 82 indicates to me that it's smoke and mirrors. They do the right thing but there's nobody there to enforce those enforcement procedures that are set out in 82. We worry about that, as we worry about Bill 128.

**Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services):** There's a great deal of mythmaking that has gone on in this chamber tonight in the course of the debate of this piece of legislation. I really would like to remind the honourable members across the way — and I know we have all experienced some of the frustrations in our constituency offices — that a little reality and a few facts in this debate about what this government is attempting to do and what this government has done would be very helpful in terms of the people watching tonight understanding.

For example, the NDP has spent a lot of time talking about the lack of enforcement. With all due respect, they had only 90 enforcers, people to go out and help enforce these orders. We're going to have 139 enforcement staff — that's more — to go out and enforce them. Under the welfare legislation, we're going to have parental support workers to help those women go after those deadbeat dads in the court, to give them the assistance they need to get it.

The opposition loves to complain. They talk about children's services and what they like to talk about are cuts. We're spending more money on child welfare in this province this year than was ever spent before. We have fewer children on welfare than the NDP had. That is what should be measured, not how much money you're throwing at some of these problems. We're interested in solving. We're interested in taking a look at the outcomes. We're interested in, not just throwing money at something, but saying: "How do we help those people? How do we put in place those programs that will actually help those people?" That's what we're doing: more money in child welfare in a way that will actually help, as opposed to just saying, "Oh gee, this has happened and that has happened in the budget."

*Interjection.*

**The Acting Speaker:** The evening is young yet. Talk to your House leader. He may give you two minutes, but other than that you're not entitled to say anything.

The member for Welland-Thorold has two minutes to respond.

**Mr Kormos:** To follow tradition for the briefest of moments, I'll thank all the people who commented on my comments.

I want to respond especially to the reference that should be addressed during the course of the debate around Bill 128, and that's the accessibility of our courts to women who will seek to utilize the standards, the guidelines in Bill 128. We all read the legal aid review published last week. We're awaiting volumes 2 and 3, which are at the printer now. This government has increasingly shut the doors to those very women who will be needing and seeking legal counsel to access those courts at all levels to give effect to Bill 128. This government has committed yet another betrayal of those women.

You know, myths: Let me tell you, the hundreds and hundreds of women and kids Shelley Martel and I have met personally across this province are not myths. They're real moms and real kids who endured real pain because of what this government did to them when it dismantled the family support plan. Real pain, not mythical pain. Real people, not mythical people. The hundreds that Shelley and I have met personally are representative of the thousands we know by virtue of the correspondence that each and every member's constituency office has been flooded with, and the phone calls. These people aren't myths. What an insult to each and every one of them who has endured so much. Because of this Attorney General's incompetence, it's in this government's bent to refer to them as myths.

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**The Acting Speaker:** Further debate?

**Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs):** I'm pleased to rise and join in this debate that deals with the Uniform Federal and Provincial Child Support Guidelines Act. This is a very important bill because what this does is harmonize Ontario law with federal law. Quite simply, if someone receives a divorce which is under federal legislation in a federally appointed court, they are able to obtain a support order as a result of that order from the divorce aspect of the judgment. That federal legislation provides a scheme by which the level of support is determined.

It would be very strange if in Ontario we did not amend the Family Law Act to be on all fours with the federal support guidelines. It would be wrong for those who obtain these orders to be able to obtain a certain order under the federal act where a divorce is involved and then have a totally different group of reasons to get an order under the Family Law Act. So what we've done is quite simply gone ahead and taken a look at the federal act and made it part of our own act, so that there's a consistency in obtaining orders.

I've listened to people talking about access to courts and how many of these there are going to be and all of the wild speculation. We've received 9,470 telephone calls on a 1-800 inquiry line so that people can get information about the child support guidelines. We've distributed 58,000 information kits so that people know and can determine whether an application should be made for a variance to bring them under the guidelines, because sometimes it may not be the right thing to do. As well, we know this has a lot to do with the tax implications because

of federal government changes to what is deductible and what has to be included in income.

We've had 173 inquiries from MPPs about people who I guess are coming to their offices to determine whether they should apply for a variance and get under the new federal guidelines. We've had 7,826 inquiries at court offices and we've had 1,473 variation applications, none of which have particularly strained the way the court system operates because we were well ready to accommodate all of these variation orders. There have been 574 hearings or trials or consent variations, and to date there have been about 615 copies of support orders received and about 723 variation orders made in all.

We have been able to deal very well so far with those who want the access to these changes. Quite simply, the federal guidelines provide a grid upon which a determination can be made as to the level of support. The province is doing nothing further than coming into consistency with that grid. I hope everyone in this Legislature would be in favour of that.

I can tell you that in Ottawa extensive public hearings took place over this issue. Those public hearings reviewed the guidelines and also talked about those kinds of cases that allowance would be made for that should fall outside of the guidelines because of some extenuating circumstances involving that family or that child or that parent or that other individual who would fall within the guidelines.

This issue has been canvassed in great detail, and the longer we delay, the longer we are permitting two different competing schemes to exist in Ontario. That isn't good for women, children and families. I hear the rhetoric of the opposition members, but I hope when they consider where this bill should go from here, they will think it is a wise idea that we pass this bill and bring Ontario's Family Law Act into compliance with the federal guidelines. That is something that should happen now, and the difficulty as we delay is that there are those people who continue to go to court and obtain orders under the Family Law Act that don't involve the guidelines, that involve a totally different system, that involve a system that is more expensive for them to access, that involve a much more difficult hearing, that involve much more cost in obtaining experts' reports and information. That is not good for the people who are appearing before the courts. Those are people who very much would benefit by the fast implementation of this bill.

We're already implementing the bill. I listened to the member for Kingston and The Islands, who claims that the implementation of this bill won't go right. I can tell him that although this bill is not in and of itself being implemented, these guidelines are already being implemented in Ontario. They're being implemented in the Ontario Court (General Division). We are implementing them through the administration of the Ministry of the Attorney General and courts administration. We are not having any difficulties implementing these guidelines and we won't have any problems implementing the guidelines, if and when they're passed, under the Family Law Act.

I urge the member for Kingston and The Islands not to make this process any more expensive and difficult for his

constituents. Having parallel guidelines is the right thing to do, so let's do it quickly and let's get it done, because this is only costing my constituents more time, more effort and more money. Quite frankly, they probably are getting less in their court orders than they would be getting under the amended Family Law Act.

I urge the member for Kingston and The Islands to talk to his caucus members and tell them how important this is. I know he's a lawyer and he understands this and he probably has clients who are in need of these very services. It's very important that they be passed. I know there are many in this chamber who will say, "Oh, we have to have long and extensive public hearings." I don't think we need that, because the Liberal government in Ottawa had those public hearings and we have benefited in the development of our act from the public hearings they had. I urge the member for Kingston and The Islands, who's a very prominent lawyer in his community, who acts for people who obviously need this help, to make sure this bill is passed quickly.

I want to say a few things because I've listened to some of the interesting debate tonight. The member from Thunder Bay makes some very good points about legal aid and the ability to access legal aid. I agree with her, but what she doesn't say is that we are the first government in 30 years to commission a report that has studied legal aid — the first time in 30 years. What is the reason we've had to do that? The reason is that the previous government, the self-righteous NDP government, made a deal with the law society called the MOU, the memorandum of understanding. Under that MOU, the NDP government entered into an agreement with the Law Society of Upper Canada and they agreed on the rates that legal aid would receive, the amount of money that legal aid would receive from the government.

This government has paid the legal aid plan exactly what they contracted with the former government. Now the former government gets up and says it's not enough money. They were the ones who made the contract. Surely they're not standing up now and saying: "Boy, we did that to fool the law society. We got them." I know that saying that's hypocritical is not parliamentary, so I'm not going to say that, but quite simply, you can't speak out of both sides of your mouth at the same time. That's what the self-righteous former NDP government is doing.

I have recognized that there is a serious access problem, particularly in the area of family law. That is why, as a result of seeing how the MOU that a previous government entered into was working, we then took the unprecedented step of having the first legal aid study in 30 years. We are reviewing that report carefully. We will be reviewing it with experts in family law and criminal law. We will be reviewing it with groups that routinely are involved in protecting those in need and making sure they have access to legal aid. We will be speaking to all of those people so that we can develop a legal aid plan, admittedly somewhat different than the one we now have, but that I hope will provide greater access in the future.

I want to speak for a few minutes about the Family Responsibility Office. It's important for people watching to understand that the Family Responsibility Office, once known as the family support plan, has over the last several years, particularly with the self-righteous NDP government in charge, racked up debts of about a billion dollars, a billion dollars that was not being collected for women and children.

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When I hear about people who have payments owing to them of \$12,000 and \$18,000 and \$6,000 and \$4,000, that's nothing new. That's a reflection of the fact that the family support plan was a plan that had no enforcement capabilities. All you could do under the family support plan was get your order and get a writ of execution from the sheriff and file it with the sheriff and wait till an asset was sold, and then maybe you could collect some money. That's all the family support plan could do. They couldn't chase any money. They had no enforcement tools.

When Mothers Against Fathers In Arrears and Families Against Deadbeats went to the former Attorney General in the self-righteous NDP government, they went ahead and asked that self-righteous government if they would start to consider implementing real enforcement, nothing particularly outrageous, but they suggested: Why don't we suspend drivers' licences for those who don't pay? Why don't we report people to credit bureaus? Why don't we deal with issues where people shelter money in other people's bank accounts? Why don't we deal with all these things?

You know what the last government did? The last government sent those groups away and said, "We're not interested." And to boot, when we brought Bill 82 forward, the self-righteous NDP brought forward an opposition day motion asking us to withdraw Bill 82 because they were not interested in eating into the \$1 billion of debt that they so conveniently ignored.

They talk about the family support plan and their regional offices and how good they were. Well, one of the reasons nobody's been able to answer the phone at the family support plan is because they had 90,000 backlogged items in regional offices that were just sitting there being ignored. And when you ignore 90,000 people, they phone. Today I can tell you that we have reduced that backlog. We've done it on the basis of what are the most important things that have to be done, and we've reduced it from 90,000 pieces to 38,000.

We had files that had not been opened in the family support plan in regional offices for five years. Why? They were long-standing old debts that women and children wanted to be able to access and get money for, and you know what, Mr Speaker? They were put away in file cabinets because they were difficult debts to collect.

I'm sure the member for Kingston and The Islands, who's been a long-practising and very prominent lawyer in his community, will tell you that the longer debts sit, the more difficult they are to collect. We all know, as lawyers, those are the kinds of files that end up sitting there for a long time. They're difficult files and they don't get looked after because they're near impossible to collect money on.

So if you neglect them, if they don't get collected, they get stale and they get more and more difficult.

But what are we doing as a government? Part of our enforcement strategy is to take those files and send them out to private collection agencies and let private collection agencies try and access that debt.

**Mr Kormos:** Ten months later.

**Hon Mr Harnick:** The member for Welland-Thorold says, "Ten months later." If he was in such a big hurry to really see enforcement tools that work, his government wouldn't have sent away people who suggested these enforcement tools five and six years ago, because if they hadn't done that and if they had looked after what they should have looked after and developed a family support plan with enforcement capability, we wouldn't be in the predicament that we are today with a billion dollars of debt continuing to accumulate month after month after month. If the member for Welland-Thorold was so interested in really collecting debt and helping women and children, he would have been begging his government, his former self-righteous government, to go ahead and to implement real enforcement tools. But they didn't do that.

Mr Speaker, I can tell you that later this month we will be implementing driver's licence suspensions. We will be sending out a request for proposals to get private sector collection agencies involved with collecting debts. We've already, to date, sent 64,000 names of people to credit agencies so that we could advise credit agencies that these people aren't paying their debts and shouldn't be extended lines of credit for their credit cards or their businesses.

This is a government, this former government, this self-righteous former NDP government, that didn't believe it was necessary to have a family support plan that could deal with self-employed people. They had no way whatsoever of dealing with self-employed people.

Well, we have reorganized the family responsibility office. We've brought in the latest technology. We now deal with electronic transfers so that money is transferred within 24 to 48 hours. As we get rid of the 90,000-piece backlog, we now have an increased ability to answer phone calls. About two thirds of them get answered within a very few minutes now. This is unprecedented in the life of the family support plan.

There are those in this chamber who will lead you to believe that the family support plan was a very good plan. Any plan that creates debt of \$1 billion over a matter of a few years speaks for itself, and anybody who wants to stand up and say, "That's a plan that works," is a party or a government or a former government that believes in big deficits and waste and a system that just doesn't work.

We are properly implementing enforcement tools that will make this plan, I believe, a very effective plan for the first time. But it takes a long time, after years and years of neglect, after a lot of rhetoric from people who don't want tougher enforcement tools, from people who, if they really were in a hurry, would have done it five or six years ago, from people who had regional offices that had backlogs, that totally ignored people. We, as a government, are changing this. I apologize for the fact that it does take a

long time, but I tell you, that's because of the state of the plan we inherited, a plan that didn't work, a plan that was a disaster and a plan that hurt women and children.

So all their rhetoric will not make me change my mind. We will have a plan that will begin to cut into that \$1 billion in debt; I'm confident of that. All the rhetoric and politics in the world will not help the women and children. The ignoring of the way that plan worked took a billion dollars out of women's and children's pockets.

Back to the bill before us, I very much hope we can bring Ontario's laws into line with the federal guidelines. I hope we can do that soon. I hope we can do that without long hearings. I hope we can do it without any hearings, because Ottawa and the federal government have had those hearings. We know that this can help women and children. We want to do it, and we want to do it now.

**The Acting Speaker:** Comments and questions?

**Mr Gerretsen:** I'm very pleased that the Attorney General has joined this debate, and I agree with him: All the rhetoric and politics in the world aren't going to make up for the fact that the plan over the last two years has been completely mismanaged. I completely concur with the law that's before us, but you've got to make sure, sir, that the law gets administered in a fair and equitable and efficient manner. We'll be looking for that to happen.

With respect to the statistics that you quoted on legal aid, I will just refer to the report that came out last week and to page 169. According to the memorandum of understanding, the plan would have been able to grant 29,000 family law certificates in 1996-97. If you read a little bit further, it states that the plan actually issued 14,063 family law certificates, which is less than half of what the memorandum of understanding would have allowed for. It also goes on to say that this contrast with the previous years is striking. In fiscal year 1993-94, 65,691 family law certificates were issued in the province. The number of family certificates has dropped to levels not seen since 1970.

In order words, between 1993 and 1996 there was a drop from 65,000 certificates issued in family law to 14,000, almost an 80% drop. And then you have the gall to stand up and say that the women and children who need the kind of protection they used to get by getting certificates for family law —

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**Hon Mrs Ecker:** It was their deal.

**Mr Gerretsen:** I don't care whose deal it was. It was under your watch, Attorney General, that only 14,000 certificates were issued and many women and children in this province who should have had the protection of the Ontario legal aid plan did not have it available to them. That is your responsibility and you failed them in that.

**Mr Kormos:** It's clear that the pundits have written yet another FSP speech for the Attorney General. We've heard the newest spin on it. At the end of the day, it was this government and this Attorney General who shut down eight regional offices with no plan for an operational central office in Downsview. It was this government and this Attorney General who day after day in the House

denied suggestions and strong suspicions that nothing was happening in Downsview. It was only when he was confronted with videotape that he had no choice but to acknowledge that he had no plan for the Downsview centralized office. Who in their right mind would shut down eight regional offices, terminate 290 staff, without a central office being ready to be up and going?

Were there problems with FSP? FSP had traditionally been under-resourced, we know that. But there wasn't a crisis until you gutted it, until you shut down eight regional offices, terminated 290 staff and left thousands of files sitting in publicly accessible hallways. That is your responsibility, Attorney General. There have always been difficulties with FSP, but never the level of crisis until you shut down eight regional offices and terminated 290 staff.

I am pleased to hear your commitment today to "soon" for the enforcement tools in Bill 82. Sadly, you've said that before too many times. This little boy has cried wolf far too often to have any credibility left. I tell you, the opposition has been on his back from day one to get Bill 82 up and operational, and if it is going to happen, it's about time.

**Mr David Caplan (Oriole):** I want to be fair and say that the Attorney General and the government have shown uncommon good sense by following the direction and the lead of our federal government. I want to acknowledge that. Perhaps that same good sense will apply to the Solicitor General and get them to drop their obstinate and ridiculous opposition to the federal gun legislation.

I would also like to invite the Attorney General to come to Oriole. We are neighbours, after all, and I have spent the better part of the summer meeting the people of Oriole. When the Attorney General stands in his place and tells us of the efficiency within the family support office, he has to meet one of my constituents who told me of waiting two hours on the phone to speak to a case worker. He really has to meet another one of my constituents who has got her second notice of eviction because the dollars that have been paid by the supporting spouse to the family support plan have not been transferred and she and her two children are in danger of losing their home and their shelter. I can tell the Attorney General and the members here that that is a very sorry state of affairs.

The family support plan has been managed incompetently. We need some real enforcement. We need some real compassion in order to get dollars which are committed to the welfare of parents, to the welfare of children, to where they truly belong. The decision to close regional offices has put untold strain on an already strained system. The Attorney General would be very wise to consider reopening those offices and ensuring an effective enforcement mechanism.

The people of Oriole told me time and time again that this was a recurring problem and I invite the Attorney General to come and meet them.

**Mr Martin:** I find it passing strange to listen to the minister this evening talk about his concern for women and children and the way that he presents this image of really caring when, if you look at the record of this gov-

ernment over the last two years and some months, nothing could be farther from the truth. Everything they've done, from the day that they took office, was an attack on the poor and the most vulnerable in this province.

They first thing they did — they weren't even in office a month. I'll remember it, I'll never forget it. It was one of the blackest days in my short history as a politician in this place when I woke up — and Mr Jackson will remember this too because he's a man with some conscience in that pack of rats over there — that morning in July to hear on the radio that this government had decided it was appropriate and acceptable to take away —

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like a ruling on whether that phrase that the honourable member used was parliamentary, sir. It sounded a little offensive to me.

**The Acting Speaker:** I would ask the member to withdraw.

**Mr Martin:** Speaker, anything I say will be offensive to this group over here, so I don't know what you want me to withdraw.

**The Acting Speaker:** I would ask the member for Sault Ste Marie to withdraw the comment.

**Mr Martin:** I called them a pack of rats because that's what rats do. They sneak around the house and they take food away from children.

**The Acting Speaker:** I don't want to debate it. Either withdraw it or I'll ask you to leave.

**Mr Martin:** I withdraw my calling them a pack of rats. The head honcho of that group of rodents —

**The Acting Speaker:** No, I'll not let you put something indirectly that you can't do directly.

**Mr Martin:** I withdraw, and my time is up.

**The Acting Speaker:** The minister has two minutes to respond.

**Hon Mr Harnick:** It's interesting when the member for Kingston and The Islands talks about how many certificates there are in one year and how many certificates in the next year. One thing he doesn't say is that, as a result of the funding reductions that were agreed to by the former government and the law society, there had to be changes effected to legal aid. Those changes were effected by the entity that runs legal aid and that was the law society. But that's something the member for Kingston and The Islands specifically doesn't talk about.

I'm indebted to those who have responded to my speech and certainly I appreciate hearing their comments. I think when we take a look at the rhetoric that is being used all around the chamber, the one thing that is clear is that, while we will obviously have our differences of opinion with respect to different subject matter that is debated, it seems to be the consensus in this place that Bill 128 is a bill that is worth passing. I urge my colleagues in this place to reflect upon the cost they impose on their constituents by not dealing with this bill now and by perhaps forcing this bill to go to committee.

I believe this bill can become law very shortly. I can tell you that we are implementing the federal guidelines in federal cases. We are now well able to do that in terms of

cases under the Ontario Family Law Act. We're ready to do so and I would urge members to pass this bill quickly.

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**The Acting Speaker (Mrs Margaret Marland):** Further debate?

**Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt):** I'm pleased to join the debate on the bill and to say we're anxious to proceed with the bill. There's much in it to commend it.

I would say to the government that frankly we don't have a lot of confidence in your competence to implement. So if we question and we prod and we ask questions, and periodically send bills to committee, it's because you've developed a history of incompetence.

I'll start to run through a few of them that have raised our concerns. The Attorney General just raised one, the family support plan. Can you imagine a bigger mess that all of us face — the government members, the members in our caucus, the NDP caucus — than when the government decided to scrap the way they were running the family support plan? Yes, it needed to be improved. But I come from business and I actually thought Mike Harris had some idea how to run an operation. That was the biggest disaster I've seen around here for a year. It caused incredible turmoil to families, often women with young children, whose only means of support was the family support program. It was a total, absolute mess. You should have been ashamed of yourselves. I hope you were ashamed of yourselves.

I take another example: Bill 26. That was the omnibus bill. We called it the bully bill. The government tried to rush that through. We held it up, and then we found the government had 150 amendments to that bill. The public out there is saying, "Why don't you simply pass this bill right away; get it done?" There's an example. A couple of smaller, but significant ones: The boot camp opened up. The day the Solicitor General was going to snip the ribbons, a lot of the boot camp prisoners walked out the front door, or drove out the front door.

I use the example of the toll road. This is the only one in the world that has been an artistic success and a business failure. There's lots of business on the toll road, but no tolls. They've gone for nine months beyond their date: no tolls. If we're going to run government like a business, it's an embarrassment to you. We hear the reason is there are more customers than we thought. It's like opening a store. "We've got to give all the stuff away because there's more people showing up than we thought." I use those examples.

The dumping, the downloading, whatever you want to call it —

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** What about the uploading, Gerry?

**Mr Phillips:** I'll come to you, Minister of Community and Social Services, in a few minutes. I know you like to barrack. That gentle voice on behalf of children is yelling across there. But I would just say to the member, here's what the government did. I haven't pointed it out till now because it was so embarrassing for them, but they had to admit in this Who Does What exercise, "We made a

\$400-million mistake." The table released in January 1997 estimated these taxes at \$5.4 billion — that's education taxes off residential. This number included, however, approximately \$400 million paid by owners of vacant commercial-industrial land. It's an important point: a \$400-million mistake, just a mistake. Here we were asked to make policy on removing education from the residential, and the government tried to hide it. They put it out in this little release on page 7. "Sorry, we made a \$400-million mistake." I go on. They appoint a Who Does What committee, they study this whole thing, and then the panel, the Who Does What Panel, was finally forced to tell the government they strongly oppose what the government is doing with their recommendations.

The reason I go through all of these is that — I know this will come as a shock to a lot of the country club members who are giving Mike the high-fives at the golf tournaments and saying, "Keep it up Mike; you're doing a great job; sock it to them," but for the business community, I tell you — and you wonder why we ask questions about bills. I just give you those examples: the family support plan a complete mess; the toll road without tolls, nine months later still without tolls; the boot camp escape; the hospital closings. We have hospitals in this province that are slated to close that are having difficulty in operating right now because there's no plan to help them even to close, assuming that they're going to close them. But they're being closed almost without a plan.

Bill 26 I mentioned. I even mention Ontario Hydro because the Premier appointed one of his senior businesspersons to become chairman. Mike Harris becomes Premier and one of the first things he does is appoint a senior person off Bay Street, a real businessperson who knows how to jump in, take control of these things, get right at the heart of this business matter. Two years and several months later, finally, the chairman fires the president and says, "There's a big problem." It took two years and two months to find the big problem.

I go through all of that because we are being asked to rush a bill through and we are being asked to pass legislation with brand-new rules designed to force things through here. There is now a track record of incompetence in this government that would make any other party blush.

The second thing I wanted to talk a little bit about was the intent of the bill. The intent of the bill is one that we're extremely supportive of, that is, finding ways to help families, often families in desperate need and often involving young children. We are very much supportive of the goals and objectives of the bill. But I would just say to the government, if you are really interested in children — and I know Mike Harris hates to hear this, but I say that I think the government has embarked on a systematic attack on young people.

I'll start to go through the reasons I believe that. The 21% cut in social assistance: I know that was politically very popular, but recognize that over half of the people who get that social assistance are children. I know the perception out there was that's going to simply cut off those people who are going down and buying a case of

beer from the beer store etc, but the real impact was on young people. You reduce a single mother's income by 21%, when she's trying to look after young people, and as my leader said today, "You go and look in the fridge or the cupboards of some of those people; look at the food that's there to feed their families for the rest of the month." There aren't many of us in this room who would be able to survive in that environment.

The tuition fees: I have in my office the Conservative Common Sense education document. It said, "We will take tuition fees up gently till they've reached 25% of the cost of education." That's not happening. Now tuition fees are going up — the highest in the country I think this year — an average of 10%; in some faculties dramatically more. There is no question that the young people in this province are seeing a future in education where there will be education for the best-off and the access will be for the best-off; those from modest or poor means will be cut off. Yet this bill is designed, we're told by the minister, to help young people.

Junior kindergarten: If you want to know a way to help young people, it is to provide them with early education. Many, many school boards in this province, because of the way the Harris government has decided to cut funding for junior kindergarten, have cut junior kindergartens out completely.

The unemployment rate among our young people is a tragedy, and we often hear the government saying, "It's not a problem; jobs are being created at an enormous rate," etc. But you know, Madam Speaker, the unemployment rate among our young people has actually gone up dramatically in 1997. In fact, for the first eight months — we now have the results through August — the unemployment rate is about 18%; a year ago at the same time it was about 15%, so up three percentage points. The number of jobs for young people in that period of time has dropped by 24,000; the number of unemployed is up 22,000. I don't think we've seen a level of unemployment among our young people of this rate, certainly going back at least 10 years, not even during the very tough 1990 and 1991-92. We pride ourselves in this province on being a leader in employment, but the unemployment rate among young people in Ontario is higher than it is in the rest of the country.

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We talked about legal aid. One of the ways that young people will have access to this bill is through some assistance in going to the courts, but the legal aid has been cut and cut dramatically. Young people in an awful lot of communities, and certainly in my community of Scarborough, are facing user fees for recreation facilities they never faced before. The one thing that they don't benefit from, by and large with very few exceptions, is the tax cut.

I find our young people saying to me: "All right. I understand we have a fiscal problem in the province of Ontario, as we've had in the country. I understand the need to get our fiscal house in order, but tell me again. You've cut social assistance for young people. You've increased

tuition fees dramatically for young people. You've cut out junior kindergarten for young people. You've cut legal aid for a lot of single parents who would have been trying to get access to some settlements from a spouse. You've put user fees on a lot of services for young people, all of that to get our fiscal house in order. But tell me again," they say. "If I have to, as a young person, go through all of that pain, how can we afford a tax cut that benefits the best-off in this province? How can we afford a tax cut that will represent lost revenue to the province of roughly \$5 billion and one where the ones who are best off in this province benefit the most?"

That's a tough one for the government to answer because if the deficit problem was so serious that they have to go through all of that pain, surely we can't afford a tax cut that benefits the best-off in this province.

The last thing I wanted to touch on was, the Minister of Community and Social Services talked about the government's commitment to young people. I have a saying I use a lot, and that is, "Don't listen to what Mike Harris says; watch what he does." I use that a lot because Mike Harris has got some extremely competent communications people.

I watched with interest the whole exercise where the province dumped on to the property taxpayers roughly \$660 million. That's about a 5% hit on property taxes. The government said, "Well, we're just doing what AMO wants us to do." They had this little checklist. "AMO proposal, government decision." You can see at social housing, a checkmark, sort of like, "We agreed with AMO." That's the Association of Municipalities of Ontario. But that's not true. The Association of Municipalities of Ontario said: "Don't put social housing on property tax. It's a huge mistake." You're dumping on to the property tax one of the most sensitive areas of social policy in the province, and that is seniors' housing, housing for people who need assisted housing. The municipalities said, "Don't do it," but the government went ahead and did it anyway. By the way, I talked earlier about the Who Does What panel. The Crombie panel said, "Don't do it."

The reason I say this is that the government says, "Well, we're looking after young people." I look at the numbers and I see in the numbers community and social services. The minister earlier today said, "We're increasing our spending on child welfare." I see a substantial cut in child welfare services in actual dollars, 1994-95 to 1996-97, a substantial cut in child and family intervention services, a cut of \$50 million in children's services and a cut of, it looks like, \$50 million in developmental services for adults and children. The numbers, the finances, the spending priorities the government puts against children and children's services show the reality, a substantial drop in spending against children's services over the last two years.

The reason I go through this is in response really to the Attorney General in his comments on the bill, to say that we in the Liberal caucus are very supportive of the goals of this bill. We're anxious to see the bill move forward. We will not let any bill go through without challenging it,

and the reason we do that is because of the history that I went through of what I and my caucus regard as government incompetence. Whether it be with the family support plan in total shambles for a year — I don't think any of us who've been around here for some time ever saw anything like it, desperate people phoning and saying, "I have no food. I have no way of meeting my rent payments," because the plan was in shambles. The government can say, "We had to fix it," but you don't fix something by completely tearing it apart for a year and putting people into misery for a whole year.

I go through all the other areas where we've seen incompetence, as I say, whether it be the toll road, the boot camp, hospital closings in chaos, the dumping exercise where the government made an announcement and then has been scrambling to try and patch it up and still doesn't have it patched up, to the omnibus bully bill, to the megacity and, second, to the priorities of the government on children.

This is harsh language to say, but I think there is a systematic attack on young people. Our young people are bearing the brunt of the government's fiscal plan to provide a tax cut for the best-off and punish the most vulnerable. The social assistance cuts hit our young people and the government says, "Oh well, the cuts are working really well because all these people have found a job."

You've only got to look at the employment numbers. When Mike Harris became Premier of Ontario in June 1995 there were 499,000 people out of work. Today there are 487,000 people out of work, roughly 12,000 fewer people. You say, "Where all these people who were on social assistance who are no longer on social assistance? They've gone out and found a job." Have they? There are essentially the same number of people out of work today as when Mike Harris became Premier.

They may not like to hear this, but they promised in the Common Sense Revolution — and I always say my own view is that the government does not create jobs, the economy creates jobs. But Mike Harris didn't believe that. Mike Harris said, "This plan, the Common Sense Revolution plan, will create more than 725,000 new jobs over the next five years." You're running about 100,000 jobs behind that target right now. You say, "We're going to make it up," and I say I sure hope you're right.

But the reason I raise this is that the government proudly trumpets the number of people who have gone off social assistance. I would simply like to know where they are because roughly the same number of people are unemployed today as when Mike Harris became Premier and it isn't that the unemployment ranks have dropped dramatically.

The bill is one that has our support for the goals and objectives clearly. You can appreciate, I hope, our scepticism about the government's ability to manage the implementation of the bill and also our concern that within the overall pattern of young people there is this sad but obvious attack on young people. They're being asked to fund the cost of the tax cut so the people at the country clubs

can buy a new set of golf clubs at the expense of all of the difficult times that young people face.

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**The Acting Speaker:** Questions and comments?

**Mr Marchese:** I want to congratulate the member for Scarborough-Agincourt on his speech. While he was speaking to Bill 128 and in support of that particular bill, he also highlighted areas of incompetence of this government while at the same time talking about areas where this government has shown a lack of interest as it relates to young people, students going to university and many other vulnerable citizens as they face the axe of this government.

What can you say to a government that has introduced over 155 bills? How can any government deal properly with any of the bills they present to this House when they have such an enormity of bills to deal with? How can anybody be competent as they introduce this great number of bills they've got to deal with? How can you supervise it? How can you feel confident about this government as it deals with so much, as it heard us say every day in this House? So many bills have already had third reading and there are so many others yet to come. The list is so long. I will begin that when I introduce my own remarks, but it's a whole lot right here. This government is so loaded with its responsibility to cut programs that it is unable to do good for anyone.

Bill 128, I have to admit, is one of the areas where, having been pressured mostly by the federal government and others, particularly women, who are looking for these supports, they at least have done the right thing, although we worry about whether the support services are there to make this bill an effective one.

I will have an opportunity to speak more on this bill as my turn comes around.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** I'd just like to point out for the honourable member that while this government may well have passed 33 bills in 1996, under the Liberals in 1989, 93 bills received royal assent. We obviously would have to move a lot faster to be able to match their record.

There are a few other points that are well worth mentioning tonight. The honourable members like to say that somehow or other this government has not put a priority on children. There are a few things that I think need to be put into the record: the fact that there are 90,000 fewer children trapped on welfare under this government; the fact that 26,000 children are having breakfast programs, who didn't have them before, because of this government; the fact that we are doubling the number of children who are going to get speech and language help; the fact that 9,000 high-risk babies are going to get identified and get the support they need — that's something else this government has done; about the 5,000 families under Better Beginnings that are going to get support; about the increased spending on support programs for disabled kids; about the 125,000 children who are going to get additional day care support. That's the agenda of a government that knows children's services are a priority.

I would like to ask something of the honourable member from the Liberal Party who talks about our welfare rates, which are actually more than 10% higher than the other provinces, and disability supports in this province are 48% higher than in any other province. Where were the Liberals going to find a billion dollars in savings in the welfare envelope? That's what they promised the voters they would do. We are taking a look at making sure we are getting people off social assistance. We know they went into jobs because we went out and asked. No other government had ever done that. They're out there in paid jobs, the majority of them. That's where they want to be.

**Mr Bradley:** What I was really pleased about was the way the member put it in context. He didn't just dwell on the individual provisions of the bill but took the time to place it in the context of all the policies of the government. If you look at the total package, you recognize that the disadvantaged people in this province are more disadvantaged as a result of the policies of this government. What you're doing in effect, he pointed out, is polarizing the province.

Everybody in this House agrees that responsible spouses should be paying the shot for expenses for their children. That is certainly superior to having the general taxpayer assume those costs. All of us want to see the system work better. It has not worked better, in our view, because the regional offices were closed and dozens upon dozens of people were fired out the door instead of being retained for the purposes of serving this program. Those people were generating funds, funds that would otherwise have had to come from taxpayers at large. They were generating those funds from those who are responsible for the upbringing of the children.

I want to plead that the government give the necessary resources to the Attorney General so that he is able to carry out his responsibilities. In so many cases we see resolutions passed on the other side or certain bills, but what we don't see are the resources put in place to carry out those responsibilities. They talk about victims' rights, for instance. That's really good, but I want to see the resources given to my friend the Attorney General so he's able to carry out his responsibilities as he would like to. The only way he can do that is to allocate the necessary funds to his ministry.

**Mr Kormos:** Let's be careful in discussing Bill 128 and understand that the formula, the support guidelines, are based upon the support payor's income. Effectively, what that means, as more and more people lose their jobs here in Ontario — this government talks about its net job creation. Well, other people have done some analysis of those jobs as well, and they're inevitably part-time, temporary and minimum-wage or subminimum-wage. The support guidelines aren't going to guarantee that young people, our kids, are going to enjoy the things they deserve. They're simply going to ensure that there is some uniformity in assessing the liability for support on the part of a paying parent.

But as we witness this government's attack on wages here in Ontario, its successful drive to create a low-wage

economy and to sustain high levels of unemployment, its obsession with its tax break, two thirds of which is going to the top 10% of income earners, let's understand that Bill 128 is not going to address the growing crisis of child poverty right here in Ontario, right here in the city of Toronto, a growing crisis which has many of its origins with the beginnings of this Harris government and some of its very specific policies.

The Conservative member speaks about support for youth. Well, one's hard-pressed to sense that there's an appreciation of that among university students and college students who are being forced to pay higher and higher tuitions and will find themselves increasingly unable to go to school or university. People just don't buy it any more.

**The Acting Speaker:** The member for Scarborough-Agincourt has two minutes to respond.

**Mr Phillips:** I appreciate the comments of the members for Fort York, Welland-Thorold and St Catharines and the minister. I think it's an interesting debate tonight, one that over time will shape the government's image and I hope the opposition's image as well.

I believe the government has embarked on — I don't know how intentional it is — an attack on young people. It seems that so many of the things they are doing directly impact young people. The minister proudly talks about the number of young people off social assistance. Logic says to me that if all these people have moved and now have a job, why is it that we still have essentially the same number of people out of work now as when the government came into office? If those people who are out of work now have no need for social assistance, that's interesting. But in my opinion, an awful lot of the impact of the social assistance cut has hit directly on young people.

I repeat what we said earlier, that we have two concerns. One is the government's incompetence to manage things like this, and second, this fits into a pattern of attack on young people. The particular bill we think will be helpful, but at the same time, around the edges, they've cut legal aid, so people will have more difficulty in accessing the bill; they've cut social assistance, so young people are getting far less help from the public than they did before. In virtually every other area — health, education and community services — we're seeing cuts. We see this as a pattern that is beginning to take shape in the province.

2030

**The Acting Speaker:** Further debate?

**Mr Marchese:** I want to begin by focusing on something that I remember the government members focusing on when we were on that side, when we were the government. You've observed, as I have over the last couple of years, how the Attorney General, and not just him but the Premier and the — I forget the title of our good friend Ernie Eves.

**Mr Martin:** The Minister of Finance.

**Mr Marchese:** The Minister of Finance, the Deputy Premier. How could I forget? When we from time to time used to blame the federal Liberal government and the Conservatives before them when they were cutting billions of dollars in their transfer payments, they blamed that on

the spending of the NDP, of course. We used to say: "Look, we're in a recession. The federal Liberal government is cutting billions of dollars of support we used to get." I remember that my good friend Charles Harnick, the Attorney General, used to say: "You're in government now. You handle the wheels. Don't blame everybody else."

**Mr Bradley:** I remember that.

**Mr Marchese:** Do you remember that? I remember it vividly. But have you noticed how the Attorney General and so many of the ministers, including the other members of the government there, are constantly complaining about the federal Liberal government, complaining about what the NDP government left them, about what these fine Liberals beside me did? They blame the whole world except themselves. That is an observation I have made that I wanted to share with the public.

Second, I also want to talk about context, because the context is important in order to understand this government. Let's look at what this government has done in all its ministries. Remember the Ministry of Natural Resources. It's virtually non-existent. They have gutted that poor ministry by firing 40% of its staff, I believe. This is to improve the ministry, because it was fat, they weren't working, presumably. They want to make it more efficient. So what do they do? They fire 40% of those people in the Ministry of Natural Resources. That's this Tory government. They did the same in the Ministry of Environment. They did the same in the Ministry of Labour. I believe there they also fired close to — I could be mistaken — 40% of their staff and the funding of that ministry. This is to make sure we make that ministry more efficient.

The motto of this government is, "To make sure we make it better by cutting." Isn't that right, member for Nepean? Isn't that right? That's the motto of your government. Isn't that correct? "We make it better by cutting more."

The other observation I make is that they claim that spending in health has increased from \$17 billion to \$18 billion. That I don't understand. It is to me perplexing. I find it paradoxical. While on the one hand they say, "We cut to make it better," with health they say, "We've increased it to make it better." That to me is somewhat contradictory, paradoxical. As usual with this government it is always a mystery, because you can never quite understand them. This whole government is cryptic in nature.

The reality is that there have been cuts in every ministry manageable, including the Ministry of Culture, which I know well. I have been there as a former minister. They have gutted that poor ministry because they don't value culture and the arts. This is a government that puts no value on the arts.

**Mr Kormos:** Comic book culture.

**Mr Marchese:** Maybe comic book culture they like and understand, possibly; I don't know.

This is the context, and this is why I don't blame a particular minister but blame the entire government for its actions. To blame one individual or another in that government is to assume they have some control. They don't.

Much of the control is exercised by their ideology, represented largely by the Premier, for whom every other minister is an instrument. I blame, first of all, their ideology; second, the Premier and the hired guns around him; and third, the ministers and those who follow them.

Alongside this context of the incredible firings by this government that we have witnessed in the last couple of years of so many people who worked in ministries that deliver services for us all, what we have seen is incredible child poverty in Ontario, indeed all of Canada but particularly Ontario. This is under a Conservative government that claims to bring prosperity by its very nature. By its very ruling of this province it is to bring about prosperity. Yet we witness incredible child poverty in this province. We witness incredible poverty among our seniors. We witness record high unemployment in this province as they boast with galloping arrogance about the incredible number of jobs they have produced. We have seen record unemployment in Ontario under this government which claims by its very virtues to bring about great prosperity for us all.

I know whom they bring prosperity for. There's no doubt about that. As they drop down in the polls, the ordinary folks, the middle-class people who supported you or thought they should have supported you are beginning to understand that the people you folks support are those who have big bucks in their pockets. They're getting to know that. Ordinary people, even union members who, by mistake, thought there might be prosperity by having you guys, even they, poor people who thought they might get jobs through you people, the middle class who thought they might get a break, realize that with your tax break they're getting nothing. Of the tax break, as my friend from Welland-Thorold said, 60% is going to 10% of your wealthiest people who've got money in their pockets already. That's where it's going. They know that.

When you drop in the polls, we see a greater political consciousness happening. They see who's on whose side. When you support landlords over tenants, they know you people are supporting the people with money in their pockets. They're beginning to see the picture. That's the context I give you.

We're seeing a greater number of people who are working as part-time workers because they've lost their full-time job. You have fired most of them, and many out there are losing their jobs as they make their operations more efficient, like you folks. These people are fired and have nowhere to go. They're on minimum wage, many of them, part-time; some of them doing two or three jobs to make a living, to keep a standard of living that's modest. Wages are going down every year that you people are in power.

The context is this: As you blame everybody, you've got to think about what you are doing. The myth making is not what we create. The myth making is something that you folks create, because you've got the wheels, the apparatus of the state to create the myths. As you pretend to do things and as you pretend to pass the load to everybody else by blaming everybody else, as you see yourself going

down in the polls, you will understand that they are understanding who is building the myths. It isn't us; it is you fine Tories on the other side.

As it relates to your competence, I wanted to touch, in context again, on the incredible number of bills you people are trying to pass on a daily basis in this House. With galloping speed you achieve galloping incompetence, because you cannot but be incompetent as you try to do so much at such great speed with such autocracy and haste, with your lack of respect for listening to people. As I tell you —

**The Acting Speaker:** The member for Fort York, I ask you to withdraw your unparliamentary language. I heard you use the word "hypocrisy."

**Mr Marchese:** No, no. I did not use the word "hypocrisy." I'm not sure what the clerk heard, but I said "autocracy," Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** It didn't sound like that.

**Mr Marchese:** That's all right. The record I'm sure will show what the clerks weren't able to hear, as they advise you. I appreciate that.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Marchese:** Perhaps she heard it; maybe the clerks didn't hear it. I apologize to the clerks.

**Mr Bradley:** I heard "autocracy."

2040

**Mr Marchese:** "Autocracy" is what I said.

I talk about galloping incompetence because you can't manage this whole thing. You can't. You witness what you did with the megacity there, and if it wasn't for the good citizens of Toronto in particular but all of Metro, we would not have been able to hold this government back. We were able to hold them at least for a hearing so they could pretend they heard us, but they did so only because of the pressure that we put upon this government. Otherwise, they would not have listened to the people of Toronto and of Metro. That was speed. It is reflected in everything that this government does, and that is why we're worried about the competence of this government.

Witness what they have done to the family support plan, and my friend from Welland-Thorold spoke to this. When we speak of incompetence, we speak of government incompetence. Look what they did. They cut eight regional offices. The Attorney General says they did that to make it better, the motto of this government. Right? "We cut to make it better." Eight regional offices closed, 290 people let go, presumably to make the operations more efficient. Now, ordinary folks, working class, middle class, upper middle class, even they understand there's something afoot here. There's nothing sane about these cuts. There's some insanity or at least incompetence in what this government is doing.

My friend from Welland-Thorold went there with our colleague Shelley Martel, and what did they find when they went into that Downsview office? Utter chaos. What did they find? The plugs of the telephones were pulled off. The offices were virtually closed. The records were in boxes and left unattended. There was hardware all around but it wasn't working, it wasn't operational. Nobody was

doing anything because they weren't plugged in, and there was no personnel to manage that.

Speaker, this is why I say to you, let us look at the issues of autocracy, issues of haste, issues of complete disregard for people who are affected by these policies, in this case women and children. It points to and questions the level of competence of this government. It needs to. What else can we say? What sane government, as my friend said, would do things like that, except those who would otherwise justify and create a myth around what they're trying to do? How do you mythologize this great blunder of this ministry, and I say this government, as we've seen, as our colleagues have seen, because there was a video there. So we worry about this government's ability to be able to carry through with Bill 128, which we support.

Happily, the federal government, although it did not do everything that many wanted it to do, which includes having 18-year-olds, those who are about to go university, as part of the family plan, which I believe should have been part of that, but under pressure they caved in, I suspect, so that wasn't touched. But it's a good idea. It has been in the making, in the works, for a couple of years. It was being debated for a couple of years. This government was part of those talks. The staff of this Attorney General was part of these talks. Surely they would have been prepared to put this into the works. As it was, it took them a long time. As it was, the Attorney General and the minister in charge of women's affairs said: "I don't think we're capable of dealing with this. Please, federal government, delay the implementation of this bill because we may not be able to do it well."

It raises two issues. First, I wish they could apply the same thinking that appears to be reasonable, the thinking that says, "Let's not rush because we may not be ready." I wish they'd applied that to the megacity, for example. I wish they'd applied that to Bill 7, the anti-worker legislation. I wish they'd applied this to the massacring of people on social assistance. I wish they would apply the same thinking to everything they're doing in this House, but they're not.

In this particular instance, you had the Attorney General and the minister of women's issues saying: "Let's slow down. We may not be ready." Good thinking, I thought. Would that this government were capable of slowing itself down so that it could apply that level-headedness to everything else they're doing, but they didn't.

Nevertheless, we have Bill 128 in front of us, which we support because it's something that will bring greater fairness to women and children and they need it. Child poverty is a serious problem in this country, in this province, and parents, particularly fathers in this case, although there are cases where women are involved but particularly fathers, have an obligation to make their payments to their children.

It befuddles me, not just befuddles but angers me, to know that there are men who are fathers of children who after leaving a relationship, for whatever reason, do not

see fit to support their children. I find that, in my view, a criminal act by men that leave their children or leave their families and leave them unsupported. I cannot for the life of me understand how men can do that.

This Bill 128 moves the benchmarks a little bit ahead, along with the federal bill, so that we have guidelines that correspond to each other. This is an advance. We know that women's incomes drop by 60% — that's probably an approximate figure — after a situation of separation or divorce, and that men's income correspondingly increases by 40%. That's a study at least that they did in California. We might assume that you could apply, universally, that principle elsewhere, and it might vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction but, by and large, women and children are impoverished and most men do reasonably well economically. We can't afford to have a system where we are not protecting the people who are part of our society. Women and children are part of our society and we have an obligation, as a state, when men fail to do their duty, to make sure they do their duty.

The member for Welland-Thorold talked about Bill 82 and the enforcement mechanisms that were there that this government has failed to act upon. Why? Because they're so charged with the heavy responsibility of cutting, they don't have the time to think about what good it should do. That's why they haven't applied their heads to Bill 82. They don't have the time. They're too busy cutting everything, too busy firing people, to deal with a good issue as was evidenced in Bill 82.

We don't trust this government to do the right thing. Bill 128 is a good measure that should have been here a long while ago, but it is here before us and we are worried about this government's potential to be able to deliver on its enforcement mechanisms. We are afraid of this government's ability not to have the administrative capacity to deal with the variations that we talked about, where people will apply for variances, no doubt. The minister may be assuring us that the capacity is there. I am worried, and that's why my friend from Welland-Thorold talked about Bill 82 as a way of indicating this government's heart isn't there to do the right thing.

The bill was there, the measures were there, the tools were there, but they're not delivering. If they could only slow down this agenda that's harming everybody, they might be able to do a few good things, including making sure that Bill 128 is properly before us, properly legislated, properly staffed. If they stop the firings of all of our civil servants, we might be able to leave a couple of people to do a good job of what's left of this province.

But we're losing our confidence and people are losing their confidence in this government. That's why I see you guys going down in the polls. It's obvious to me. I know you're desperately thinking about what to do to recover from that drop, but I tell you, you are beyond hope, you are beyond salvation. Nobody can save you guys now. The descent is so steep, you don't have the fingernails to be able to put them into the rock and climb up. You don't have the fingernails to do that because, you see, as you're climbing up the fingernails are just breaking. Bill 128 is a

good measure. I hope this government stops its agenda and staffs it properly to do it right.

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**The Acting Speaker:** Questions and comments? The member for Nepean.

**Mr John R. Baird (Nepean):** I am pleased to have the opportunity to respond to my friend from Fort York. I should say at the outset I have great respect for the member for Fort York, but to listen to this former NDP minister, a key member of Bob Rae's team, this former minister and this member who squeezed the hard-working middle-class families in this province until they squealed — tax increase after tax increase, killing jobs right across the province, in every region. They bore no problem in any part of the province.

In Marchese's Ontario, the only way to start a small business was to buy a big one and just wait as it became small. Bigger government and bigger taxes led to no hope, led to no opportunity and led to far too few jobs in this province.

We listened with great interest to the Minister of Community and Social Services list the long list of services and augmentations this government has brought in for children in this province. But the absolute best thing we can do for poor children in this province is to ensure that mom and dad can get a job, that they can go out and join the working world. That is the absolute best thing we can do for child poverty. Nothing else will do what that will do.

What have we seen in the last two years? Two hundred and twenty-four thousand net new jobs created in this province. To see the sour look on those opposition members' faces when they announced that — sour, sour, sour. It's almost as if it's a bad thing that 224,000 net new jobs have been created.

What's happened at the same time? We've seen 219,000 people off welfare, 90,000 of whom, as the member for Durham West said, have been children.

So we've seen more hope, we've seen more opportunity and we've seen more job creation. Ontario has turned a corner. There is more hope for a brighter future. There is no social justice in high taxes and high debt. There is no social justice in \$11-billion deficits.

**Mrs McLeod:** I appreciate the comments from the member for Fort York who, as other speakers on this legislation have done, has expressed concerns about whether or not Bill 128 will serve to get more money to women and children, just as we expressed concerns about whether Bill 82, the family support plan bill, would get more money to women and children.

With that in mind, I want to return to the comments that were made by the Attorney General earlier this evening, because the Attorney General felt compelled to recognize what we all knew, that there were some very serious problems with the operation of the family support plan, very serious backlogs. My concern in wanting to come back to the Attorney General's comments is that he continues to persist in a misunderstanding, perhaps deliberate, of the reasons why there were backlogs in this plan and

the way in which his changes to the plan have totally confused the problem and made the problem worse.

The Attorney General seemed to suggest that there was a backlog in regional offices. I suggest to you that simply is not verified by the facts. I have a fact sheet that was put out by the ministry at the time they were making the changes. They recognized the fact there were 50,000 calls a day to the plan, with only about 6% of the callers getting through at any one time. That's province-wide, not in the regional offices. In the regional offices, they note that there were fewer than 60 people a day on average going into each regional office and those 60 people a day in each of the eight regional offices were going because they couldn't get through on the telephone.

What was the minister's answer to the problem? Shut down the regional offices, take away the access for those 60 people a day in eight offices who were at least finding a person who could help deal with the problems, add those to the backlog and create even greater backlogs for people trying to get through on the telephone.

The minister has to accept the fact that you can't actually improve the plan by simply taking a few staff from the regional offices and putting them into a still-overworked telephone system where nobody gets answers, and you can't do it with a 15% reduction in the budget of the family support plan, which is where this all started.

**Mr Martin:** I want to say that I am in complete sympathy with the argument put so cogently and so intelligently by the member for Fort York tonight. He has some real, genuine and sincere concerns about how this bill will fit into the whole program of this government.

He admits, as we all do, that this is a piece of legislation that has some merit, that will probably go a way to helping women and children. But if it's not dealt with in a sensitive, intelligent, efficient and effective manner, it will do nothing. It will fall into that big, black hole that the folks over here have developed around anything that concerns the wellbeing and the welfare of women and children in this province.

I was saying a little while ago, when I was cut off for perhaps a rather intemperate remark, that the first thing this government did in July 1995, upon getting the levers of power, they were so charged with this new opportunity, new energy they had that they took 22% away from the income of the lowest and most vulnerable people in our communities. All of those folks in our communities, for the most part, had children they were looking after.

Here we have a government that in a bullying way just took money that was going to go to putting bread on the table, to paying the rent, to putting clothes on the backs of children, on one hand, talking about their very sincere attempt, it seems, on the other hand, to put in place here some legislation that will help children, somewhat, I suppose — and I hate to use this word because I know the Speaker is going to hop up and ask me to retract, but it is hypocritical, and that's unfortunate. But I retract, I withdraw.

**The Acting Speaker:** I say to the member for Sault Ste Marie, I am not going to hop up. I am going to ask you to withdraw your unparliamentary language.

**Mr Martin:** I will withdraw that remark. But it is.

**Hon Cameron Jackson (Minister without Portfolio [Seniors Issues]):** First of all, I'd like to respond to the comments from the member for Fort York who, as has been indicated, served in this House for quite a few years while he was a member of cabinet and in government.

I was deeply distressed to hear him refer to massacring people on social assistance. I think that is language which is most inappropriate in this House. But if the member were fair in examining his record of service for his government in this Legislature, he'd be reminded that it was under his government's jurisdiction that we saw the largest growth in welfare recipients in this province's history.

It was open-ended. There was in fact an organized plan on the part of the government of the day to punch a huge hole and siphon off dollars from the legal aid plan of this province, millions and millions of dollars specifically designed for turning over as much as 60% of all the files for welfare recipients in this province and causing unnecessary expense to taxpayers and inappropriate use of both welfare and legal aid dollars in this province, until we caught wind of it and put a stop to it in 1994.

I recall under his government the ads that were being placed in Alberta: Come to Ontario — essentially to get a rental unit. But the point was that this was the most expensive welfare in North America. This was a testament to the government, that this is what they were advocating, that we were going to be the richest welfare state in North America. That is the history of the former government and that's why they're the former government and why the decisions they made got them into so much trouble. You were so busy trying to buy the votes of the poor that you cheated them out of their own future.

**The Acting Speaker:** The member for Fort York.

**Mr Marchese:** I want to thank the members for Nepean, Fort William Sault Ste Marie and Burlington South for their comments. I appreciate them.

I do want to say, would that the poor would vote for the NDP, because if they did, we'd form a government almost every time. The sad matter is that a lot of them vote for them, for those people there. That's the sad reality of it.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** What's sad about it?

**Mr Marchese:** The sad reality, my good friend from Kitchener, is this: You see the soul of this government as you hear the member for Nepean and the member for Burlington South. You see the soul. It's not a big window. You could see it. It's the tiniest of windows.

You see how smug they are. You can feel how these people can do no wrong. You can see, as the member for Burlington South speaks, that he builds this idyllic picture of what this government is doing and that what we did in the past was bleak, was bad, and what you folks are doing is idyllic. You can do no wrong.

Oh, the galloping jobs we're seeing under this government, contrasted to the highest level of unemployment we have ever seen — under them. But you see how smug they

are. They say, "The opposition doesn't like to praise us as we build these thousands of jobs," but they are creating the worst unemployment situation I've ever seen, under them. You see the arrogance, you see the autocracy, you see the haste, you see the dictatorial nature of this government and you see the smugness. Each time you listen to these people, they present —

**Mr Kormos:** Smarmy.

**Mr Marchese:** It is smarmy, isn't it? It's smarmy because it isn't real. You're going down in the polls, and it's a reflection of the fact that people see it. It can't last much longer. The only way you might save yourselves is to stop this agenda, but on Bill 128 we're with you and we hope you put in the resources to make it work.

2100

**Mr Ed Doyle (Wentworth East):** I rise to speak in support of Bill 128. I will be talking about the bill tonight, by the way, which is in effect the Uniform Federal and Provincial Child Support Guidelines Act, so I'll talk about that.

The member for Fort York had mentioned that we're sliding in the polls. I would like to start my address by saying that when the slide stops, we'll still be standing on their heads, because they haven't gone anywhere in the polls, up or down.

When we first came to power in 1995, the people of the province were pretty frustrated. They wanted some change, and they're getting change. We never said in the campaign that it was going to be change that would come easily. We never said that, I never said that and I don't know of any of my colleagues who did. They simply wanted government that was going to be more efficient, and we're going to give them more efficient government. That's what we are attempting to do, and we're succeeding in most cases.

The people also wanted different governments to work together; that is, work with the federal government. This bill is a fine example of how we are working together with the federal government to make the province and the country a better place in which to live so that we can administer our programs more efficiently.

The people of Ontario said they wanted a system that is going to be simple to understand, one that is basically user-friendly, not a cumbersome system and not one convoluted by different laws and regulations. This is just another example of how this administration is working towards making the operation of government much more effective and reducing the maze of confusing and conflicting laws and regulations between different levels of government.

This evening we are debating and asking the Legislature to bring Ontario's Family Law Act into line with the federal child support guidelines. Right now, federal laws apply to divorce, while provincial family law applies in all other cases, such as when parents are separated, were never married, for example, or maybe have an out-of-court agreement. By paralleling the support guidelines, the same approach to calculating child support will apply regardless

of whether a child support order is made under federal or provincial law.

The guidelines replace the current practice of determining child support on an ad hoc, case-by-case basis. At the present time, a situation such as that can happen in Ontario. Perhaps an individual seeks support due to a separation. In this case, the Family Law Act applies and the judge makes a support order without any guidelines. After a time, the same individual may apply for and receive a divorce. This would mean, of course, that the federal Divorce Act would then be in effect and a new support order under different guidelines would apply. Even though there may not have been any material change in the recipient's situation, it is possible that a judge can set a new child support order not consistent with the previous. This would cause financial disruption and uncertainty for the recipient. Two sets of laws affecting parents and children in the same province could and would create confusion and inequity.

The changes proposed in this piece of legislation are a progressive step by this government and will undoubtedly provide a better, more effective method of determining child support. These changes in guidelines will lower legal costs for parents, speed up the resolution of family disputes and create predictability and certainty in the system. Above all, they will ensure more consistent treatment to support-paying parents and provide sufficient flexibility to ensure awards are fair and relate to individual circumstances.

For the vast majority of parents, the guidelines will mean they can determine the amount of child support that a judge would likely order before even going to trial. In most cases this should reduce conflict and the need for lengthy and costly negotiations.

The guidelines are also meant to maintain a high level of consistency so that people in the same circumstances will pay the same amount. This is an important point, because discrepancies between similar cases have often been a sticking point with most people. This legislation will address those concerns.

The guidelines offer flexibility so that other factors can be considered in determining a support order. For example, child support amounts can be adjusted to recognize a child's special needs and expenses or to prevent financial hardship for a parent or child in extraordinary circumstances.

During this debate, both opposition parties have supported the goals and benefits of harmonizing the guidelines. They have also agreed with the government that consistency and predictability would be in the best interests of those involved, particularly the children.

Under the guidelines, parents will continue to have the opportunity to negotiate out of the courts the child support payments that they feel best meet the needs of their child or children. When their agreement goes to court, the judges will simply refer to the guidelines to make sure the amount of child support is reasonable.

At the same time as supporting the government's initiative on this legislation, the opposition has sometimes

accused the government of delaying the introduction or second reading of Bill 128. Well, that simply isn't correct. It was prudent for the government to wait until the federal government had finalized its guidelines before Ontario brought forward its legislation to comply with the federal format, which we did on May 1. Many other provinces followed the same course. Thus far, five other provinces have followed the same route as here in Ontario, while most of the other provinces have indicated their intention of moving in the same direction.

Leading up to the introduction and implementation of the new federal guidelines, the ministry has been developing a detailed implementation plan for the federal child support guidelines in consultation with an external advisory group made up of senior members of the judiciary and practising lawyers to ensure a smooth transition. The province is already offering a number of services aimed at providing parents with the information and help they need to understand the guidelines and ideally to reach agreements before they go to court. Information officers are based in the busiest courts, and all courts have staff trained to provide information to help people with the filing of various applications. Ontario will also assess the impact of the guidelines on families and can make changes to the guidelines if that proves to be necessary.

The legislation is clearly an example of cooperation between different levels of government. Ultimately, we will have a better system that is easier to understand and will be governed by a single set of rules instead of the two that are currently used. This legislation is another example of the Harris government working to improve the workings and operations of government. Why do we need differing laws and regulations that don't serve any particular need? By streamlining and adopting the federal guidelines for child support, we will ensure that the inequities in treatment of children in child support will end and that support payments will be consistent throughout the province.

Children are the first priority, and this legislation will indeed help those families in these circumstances to navigate through the process without the unneeded difficulties of dealing with the differences in law between two levels of government.

**The Acting Speaker:** Questions and comments?

**Mr Bradley:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I have been prevailed upon to respond to the speech.

I want to compliment the member on defending the government position on this. He spoke directly to the bill and the provisions of the bill and didn't take an opportunity to look at it in the context of all the other legislation that's coming in and the difficulties that are being faced by people who are in a disadvantaged position.

For example, I think we can tie it into the bill by saying it's extremely important as a bill because single parents are going to be faced with less public transportation or more expensive public transportation. We're going to have libraries now charging user fees. If the children are to play such games as hockey, which is a more expensive game than others, you'll perhaps be astounded at what is

charged now as a registration for youngsters. I look at a number of different areas, including rent control, because when a person is compelled for some reason or other to leave one rental accommodation to go to another rental accommodation, that person will find that she or he is facing a rent increase.

So in the context of everything else that's happening, this bill is positive, but I think we must look at it in that context, as many of the speakers have.

We also have to ensure that with any piece of legislation, the appropriate resources are available to enforce it. If you do not have sufficient resources and staff and allocation of funds, the provisions of the bill are virtually meaningless, and I know the member would not want them to be.

2110

**Mr Kormos:** Let me return briefly to a matter that the member for Fort William raised in her comments, and the member for St Catharines has made reference to it. We're talking about access. If the government members would prefer not to believe what I have to say — and that's fine — go talk to the women for whom legal counsel is impossible because of the drastic cuts in the course of the last two years to legal aid funding. This government hasn't met its responsibility to ensure that women have access to counsel. Talk to these women. They may not be coming to your constituency office, but they're coming to New Democrats' constituency offices expressing with great sadness the fact that needed legal services are being denied them, and being denied them in growing numbers.

Go talk to Brenda Harlen, who practises family law down in Welland. Talk to Dianne Grenier, another family law practitioner. Talk to any number of hardworking, committed counsel who dearly want to advocate on behalf of women's and children's interest in family litigation.

We know that this bill should generate and has attracted a great deal of attention on the part of a whole lot of mothers who understand that they should be seeking variances of the support that's being paid for their children's care and welfare to meet the new guidelines but who aren't going to get that variance, who aren't going to get access to that courtroom, because this government hasn't demonstrated any capacity to develop a plan of preparation.

How refreshing it would be for somebody from this government, be it the government House leader or the Attorney General or the Premier, to stand and say there is going to be a specific response to the dramatic new needs that are being generated by Bill 128. I'm afraid we won't hear that from them.

**Hon Mr Harnick:** I listened intently to the remarks of my colleague. Certainly he outlined very carefully what the contents of the bill are all about and he also outlined very carefully how important it will be to have Ontario's guidelines compatible with the federal guidelines. That's really what this bill is all about.

We know that in Ottawa this bill was extensively researched. It was the product of about six years of federal-provincial consultation across the country. All of the

provinces are considering, if they haven't done it already, their own compatible legislation. The federal government held a very extensive hearing process to ensure that the bill was going to provide benefits.

My colleague from Wentworth certainly outlined in very great detail why it's important for this bill to be passed and to make sure that people going to court under a provincial bill were not having different criteria applied to them as they sought a court order or a support order than people who were going to court under a divorce petition and seeking a support order. It doesn't make sense to deal with it any differently. The member for Wentworth East set this out in very clear detail. I know there are many members here who were talking about a number of other topics tonight, but that is what Bill 128 is about and he very instructively went through the bill.

**Mrs McLeod:** The member for Wentworth East and the Attorney General both miss the essential point of tonight's debate. The problem is not with the piece of legislation. Bill 128 is fine. It follows the federal model. For the first time we have a piece of legislation before this House which follows something which does make sense and which we can look forward to supporting. That's not the issue.

The issue is whether or not it is actually going to lead to some assurance that women and children will get the dollars they need. In this case, the bill undoubtedly involves more access to the court to ensure that they can get the support they need. That's why we keep coming back to the issue of legal aid. The Attorney General wants to somehow ignore that problem by saying, "Of course there are problems with legal aid, but they all belong to the New Democrats." There is a problem with legal aid now, and the problem specifically affects the ability of this government to do anything at all with Bill 128, which is before us tonight.

The review which the Attorney General has just released publicly makes it very clear that the legal aid support plan had hoped, despite the fact that there were very severe limitations, tariffs, put on access to certificates, that it would be able to grant 29,000 family law certificates in 1996-97. That would cover, hopefully, priority one and priority two matters. Priority two matters are support variations subject to a cost-benefit analysis. That's one of the areas in priority two and it is specifically the area that Bill 128 addresses tonight.

The fact is that in 1996-97, only 14,063 family law certificates were issued. The other fact is that before there was a tariff, a limitation put on the number of family law certificates that could be issued, support variation certificates were already reduced. So they got a double hit. There's going to be no additional support for women to get into court to get the variation they need.

**The Acting Speaker:** The member for Wentworth East has two minutes to respond.

**Mr Doyle:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, and my thanks to the minister as well. I feel a little odd in that the members for St Catharines, Fort William and indeed Welland-Thorold have more or less given me a bit

of a scolding because I addressed the bill. I find that to be somewhat unusual, but there are other people in the province who really are appreciative of this bill and the fact that it is going to do a lot of good for the province and the women and children of the province. This is a government that is attempting to do what the people of the province would like us to do. They wanted change and we tried to provide that.

I would like to read to you some of the people who support what we're doing in this bill. The legislation introduced will bring Ontario's Family Law Act into line with the federal government's child support guidelines. One of the people who supports it, for example, is lawyer Phil Epstein.

"This is a progressive step," he says, "by the Ontario government and it will undoubtedly provide a better and more effective method of determining child support." He goes on to say, "The adoption of the guidelines will lower legal costs for parents, speed up the resolution of family disputes and create predictability and certainty."

"Above all," he goes on to say, "they will ensure more consistent treatment to support-paying parents and yet provide sufficient flexibility to ensure that awards are fair and relate to individual and family circumstances."

The government is attempting to make government work better for citizens, and this bill will certainly go a long way in accomplishing that.

2120

**The Acting Speaker:** Further debate?

**Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich):** I am happy to speak to Bill 128. As we've indicated, we will be supporting the bill.

The most difficult part of being an opposition member is that we don't get an opportunity, as the government does, to get the message out to the people of Ontario about what they really are doing, in particular for children in Ontario. The worst part about the presentation of this bill is that they forward the information as though they were doing something wonderful for children in Ontario. In fact, we even had the minister in the House this evening giving us a whole long list of announcements and investments they've made, all in the name of helping children.

Quite frankly, the public in Ontario is not buying that message. I'll admit that they're certainly doing everything they can — it's notable, I guess, that that minister in particular worked in communications with the Conservatives for a number of years and now is continuing in that work to constantly communicate a message, whether those things are true or not. We have found many instances — because we are going around the province and talking to people right out there on the front line who are telling us that the plan in this government, the Conservative government of Ontario, is not in favour of children.

The Attorney General forwarded this bill for us to debate as though magically things are going to become wonderful for children. The reality is, as has been mentioned by my colleagues on this side of the House, that if people cannot access the system, they'll never get the benefits of this. We can see the same thing happening with

the disability changes happening in Ontario under the bill we will be debating. In Bill 142 the pattern is the same. While some of the supports that will be introduced will serve a certain population, the hook is that it'll only serve those people who manage to get over the bar and be classified as disabled enough, according to this government's regulation, to ever access the good things that may be available there. The same is true with Bill 128.

The most worrisome part about this Ontario government, these Conservatives, is that the pattern is so similar in such a number of ministries that it makes me realize that each minister doesn't talk to the other, that you don't realize all the impacts on children, for one, on mothers, for another. How can you honestly say that a family support plan is working in Ontario today when each one of us in this House receives countless calls from mothers and fathers who still are not able to access supports they are duly to be receiving? We're still getting those calls.

Last Friday, I was in my constituency office and met one of the fathers, who complained bitterly about paying on a regular basis, whose company where he works legitimately every other week takes payments from him to turn them over, but with the spouse, the mother of the children, who has custody, never receiving the money. Yet day after day we have the Attorney General standing up and claiming that everything is rosy and everything is wonderful. We have example after example where that is simply not the case.

The pattern is absolutely alarming. My community of Windsor is suffering greatly because of the significant cuts to the health care system by this Conservative government. Now, I will admit that the NDP certainly started us down the road of cuts. But we're concerned about this pattern of not preparing communities for the cuts you impose under the guise of making it more efficient. It simply doesn't work.

We had a bit of a break this past week in that we were finally given access to a private report. It's entitled — with a big stamp "confidential" — Clinical Review of Emergency Services in Windsor. There are a number of people in here who are aware of the difficulties we're experiencing with our Windsor health care. We recognized a long time ago that this government is obligated to plan in the community before it forces hospitals to stop delivering those services, but they haven't done that, and now they've been caught red-handed with their own report commissioned by their own minister — absolutely the most damning piece of evidence ever in terms of health care service delivered anywhere in Ontario.

We reckon that many communities should be very fearful, because this is the same pattern occurring in your own community. Your minister stands up and talks about the reinvestment that never actually happens. This very same minister, who talked about reinvesting in Windsor, must stand up and admit that not one red cent has yet to be delivered to the Windsor community. Yet they continue to talk about reinvestments.

The same is true with all the other programs affecting children. Even tonight the minister stood once again with

her list of what they've done for children. May I say that on the child care issue not one red cent has flowed from last year's budgeted amount of \$40 million to improve child care. Her Minister of Finance had to admit on national CBC television that that amount was never spent. But you lauded that program, "Look what we're doing for child care." Not one red cent of that \$40 million was ever spent, and in fact now it's been converted to a tax credit. For many families that means they've got to spend money that they may or may not have in order to access the credit in the first place.

That's the part of the story that the government doesn't tell you. They don't tell you that we haven't had a cent spent yet on speech therapy, which was announced last year, but the minister tonight stands and talks again about their reinvestment for speech therapy. Let me say again, not one red cent has yet been delivered to the people who are to use that money. We are talking to the people on the line.

**The Acting Speaker:** Excuse me, member for Windsor-Sandwich. There is a lot of noise in this chamber, and I would ask the private conversations to go on outside the chamber. Thank you.

**Mrs Pupatello:** We heard again tonight about this increase of thousands of children accessing the breakfast program. May I say again, not one red cent is finding its way to actually serving breakfast programs in Ontario. Only last week we heard of the Metro Toronto breakfast program —

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Just a moment, Minister. I call the members to order. There is far too much noise. I cannot even hear the minister on a point of order. Go ahead, Minister.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** I would just like to encourage the honourable member to please check her facts. I would not want to accuse her of doing anything that is wrong here —

**The Acting Speaker:** I'm sorry. That's not a point of order.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** I wish she would check her facts. She is incorrect.

**The Acting Speaker:** It's not a point of order. Please continue.

**Mrs Pupatello:** The Minister of Health — I'll give you an example from just this month — at the Ontario Hospital Association stood in front of all kinds of hospital directors and actually said that he has reinvested \$45 million into Windsor health care. The reality is that not one red cent has found its way to Windsor in health care. That is a fact. That is a fact that has been acknowledged by the minister himself, who dared to sit on this most damning evidence yet for over 30 days and has yet to act when we are in desperate need of capital moneys to make renovations because you closed our emergency ward. You didn't allow us to expand the others before you closed it.

This is the group that is responsible for the kind of services we have in our communities today, and this bill is

yet one more example of terrible planning by this government. You don't plan for the changes you make. Tell me what good it is to bring in more guidelines and more rules when you don't have the people to enforce them.

In my community, you closed the Windsor regional office for family support and threw people who had a significant amount of experience in dealing with this issue out on the streets. Instead, you have a completely bogged system that doesn't work. We in our offices see the full brunt of that, because we have families, children who aren't getting the support they need. This government can take the blame. It lies exactly at this Attorney General's feet, the very minister who tonight has us debating Bill 128. This bill may do more for families, but you cannot look at this by itself, because you have to allow families to actually access the system.

All of us tonight spoke about the report of the Ontario legal aid review. It proved what we have been saying all along, that there are women, mostly, who cannot access the legal system to go through the courts so that Bill 128 will be of any use to them. If you can't access the system because you can't get the legal aid certificate — lawyers don't want to honour legal aid certificates any more because this government, the Mike Harris government, doesn't have a great track record in terms of honouring those same certificates.

How can you stand today and talk about what you're doing for children? The minister, who has the nerve to put his own face on a food bank bag in his community, wants to be part of this group that purports to be for children. We've seen all of that already. We've seen what is really driving this. All the things you are doing for children you're only doing to them; you're not doing for them. The reality is that there are things happening in Ontario today that, had you considered effects on children first, you just wouldn't have done. At least I'm giving you credit. I'm suggesting that if you knew the negative effects on children, you wouldn't have done it. You certainly wouldn't have cut \$17 million from front-line workers of children's aid.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** We're spending more on child welfare than you did, Sandra.

**Mrs Pupatello:** The minister continues to harp about what they're doing. The truth of the matter is that you have 250 fewer social workers. We now have reports of the caseloads around Ontario for child care workers through children's aid. There are social workers out there with over 40 cases of children, and this minister stands up as though she's got an answer for this? It is her government that cut money to children's aid without ever knowing it would mean fewer workers on the streets.

**The Acting Speaker:** Would the member for Windsor-Sandwich like to adjourn the House?

**Mrs Pupatello:** It being 9:30, I'm prepared to continue my debate when Bill 128 arises next.

**The Acting Speaker:** It being 9:30 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 tomorrow afternoon.

*The House adjourned at 2130.*

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**Tuesday 16 September 1997**

**Mardi 16 septembre 1997**

Speaker  
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Président  
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

Clerk  
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier  
Claude L. DesRosiers

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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 16 September 1997

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 16 septembre 1997

*The House met at 1334.  
Prayers.*

### MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

#### HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

**Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South):** I rise today to note what otherwise might not be remarked upon in this House, because the decision made wasn't done by this House. But it's the omission we wish to draw attention to today, the fact that the fates of Wellesley Central Hospital and Doctors Hospital here in Toronto have been determined to some degree — the hospitals have not given up — by the courts, a course of action made necessary by the abdication of this government, the decision of this government not to come to terms with its responsibility to describe and set policy for an adequate hospital and health system in this province.

Instead what we have is a unique approach. I say that very carefully, having talked to the doctors and the nurses at Doctors Hospital, for example, in terms of their ability to reach the multicultural community, and Wellesley Hospital in terms of their ability to reach people affected with AIDS and the poor people of this city. That's been rejected out of hand by this government, by a government that chose not to set up an urban health policy.

We have had such weak response, almost no response, from the members from Metro Toronto in the Conservative caucus to say, "These things are needed to keep Metro Toronto as a livable city," these institutions that have become a living part of the neighbourhoods and the communities they're in. Instead we have a sterile court decision saying these services can't exist. Shame on this government.

#### AGRIUM INC

**Mr Len Wood (Cochrane North):** I am pleased to inform all members of the House of a new project that will be developed in my riding that is expected to create 200 temporary jobs during construction and about 100 permanent jobs in approximately two years.

Agrium Inc, which is the largest North American producer of nitrogen fertilizers and a major producer of potash and phosphate fertilizers, recently announced that it will spend US\$70 million over the next two years to de-

velop a high-quality phosphate deposit located in Val Rita near Kapuskasing. Agrium Inc will turn the phosphate deposit, originally drilled in 1954, into an open pit mine. It's certainly good news for the area, to see, after 42 years, the mine brought into production, creating much-needed jobs in the Kapuskasing area.

I would like to congratulate Agrium Inc for investing in northern Ontario and contributing to our local economy. If it's true that the private sector has a very important role to play in job creation, it is also true that we need to provide them with the necessary infrastructure, such as well-maintained highways and access to education and health care for workers and their families, to keep inducing them to invest in our northern communities.

This is the government's role, to ensure that northern Ontario remains a good place to invest now and in the future.

#### HOUSING MARKET

**Mr Douglas B. Ford (Etobicoke-Humber):** Another good-news story has come out today. According to the Re/Max quarterly report released yesterday, existing homeowners are getting back into the real estate market. Evidence right here in Ontario shows that demand, sales and prices are up both in major urban centres and smaller communities.

Toronto neighbourhoods are reporting sales increases as high as 34% over this time last year, and some areas have price increases exceeding 10%. Sales in greater Toronto area communities, such as Mississauga and my own community of Etobicoke, showed continued sales increases from 11% to 20%. Surrounding communities, such as Oshawa, Pickering, Markham and Barrie, are experiencing double-digit increases in both sales and prices. Evidence from across the province: Ottawa 26%, Peterborough 15%, Sault Ste Marie 16%, St Catharines 15%.

Not only does the report from Re/Max cite low mortgage rates, a strong economy, and increasing consumer confidence to have made a difference, but market strength is expected to continue.

What a difference two years can make. The proof is in the pudding.

#### EMERGENCY SERVICES

**Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich):** This morning in Windsor our two local hospitals and the dis-

strict health council held a press conference announcing their response to the emergency review that was commissioned by this Minister of Health and this Conservative government. Yes, our hospitals will try to implement change to deal with the crisis that faces Windsorites in emergency care. But there was a phantom at this meeting, and that phantom was the Minister of Health and the Premier of Ontario.

Let me tell you what we need in Windsor to make those changes: \$1.3 million in capital change at both sites; \$600,000 in staffing costs at both sites. Did you know that our hospitals have spent \$6 million in total in restructuring costs, with no reimbursement by this government? Did you know that your health cuts have cost our hospitals \$28 million so far in two years? That cut in health care is directly impacting on patients in the Windsor area.

This government forced the closure of the west end emergency site. You forced this closure without other sites being prepared for that. So far our hospitals, having lost \$28 million by your cuts, are struggling just to survive and provide care. Unfortunately, that's not happening. What we need today is emergency relief by this minister, by this government, because all of Ontario will be watching what happens in Windsor.

1340

#### EDUCATION FINANCING

**Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma):** If this provincial government cared about children and their education, the government would not be forcing a confrontation with the teachers in Ontario. If the minister cared about protecting classroom education, the government would not be taking another \$1 billion out of education funding and saying to teachers that this is non-negotiable. If the Conservatives cared about making Ontario competitive, they would not be short-changing young people by cutting funding for classroom supplies, books and equipment for students. They would not be taking another billion dollars out of education over and above the \$400 million they've already taken out of education.

If the minister and the Conservatives cared about kids, they wouldn't be forcing a crisis in education while at the same time spending a million dollars across the province to advertise what a wonderful job they are doing.

If this government cared at all about children in Ontario, the Tories would not be bringing about a disruption in classes this fall for the students of this province and they would not be using kids as pawns in their struggles to try and break the teachers' federations.

Why on earth is it that this government claims to care about the future of Ontario and it is at the same time cutting funding out of the very thing that is important —

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Thank you.

#### MIKE HILDEBRAND

**Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener):** I rise today to pay tribute to a young man, a Kitchener resident who is a

hero — Mike Hildebrand. Every once in a while an event takes place which best represents the true nature of Ontario's youth.

Imagine, if you will, that you're on a camping trip in our beautiful Algonquin Park, asleep in your tent in the early morning hours, when you are suddenly startled awake and find yourself being dragged from your tent by a full-sized, rogue black bear.

This is the terror 11-year-old Nicholas Aikins experienced this summer. Nicholas screamed out in terror. Awakened by Nicholas's screams, Mike Hildebrand and his co-counsellor Michelle Hay ran to his rescue and found themselves confronted by the bear mauling Nicholas and trying to drag him away. Mike reacted quickly. He grabbed a canoe paddle and attacked the bear, driving it away from its prey.

From Nicholas's hospital bed his father, Steve Aikens, said Mike Hildebrand is "quite a hero. He without doubt saved my son's life. He put himself, his own life, in danger to save my son."

Much too often we are inundated in the media by negative stories of our young people. We are bombarded in the media with stories of gangs, drugs, fights and vandalism. But these negative images are not representative of the millions of young men and women, boys and girls who make up our youth. I am of the belief that Mike Hildebrand is both a hero and is representative of the fine core of young people in this province.

Mike was willing to put his life on the line in the defence of someone in need. I know I speak on behalf of the assembly when I say to Mike Hildebrand, thank you, Mike, for reminding us of all that is good in our youth.

#### GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** At the very time people are asking that junk mail not be placed in their mailboxes, political propaganda from the Harris government, paid for by their tax dollars, is arriving at homes across the province. At a cost of over a million dollars, the Minister of Education, at the behest of the Premier's backroom advisers, is using tax dollars to give the Conservative government's slant to the often unwise changes it is imposing upon students without consulting meaningfully with the front-line people who deliver educational services in Ontario.

Rather than sitting down with representatives of students, parents and the teaching profession to reach a consensus on the major education issues of the day, the Harris government is bulldozing ahead with its radical revolution and ignoring the consequences of its haste and its dramatic withdrawal of hundreds of millions of dollars from educational services in the province.

If the Conservative Party of Mike Harris wishes to purvey its partisan propaganda at a cost of over \$1 million, the party and not the taxpayers should pay the bill. As residents of Ontario pull these propaganda pieces out of their mailboxes, they should know that it is being paid for

with their tax dollars, just as the television ads they see on TV screens are being funded.

John Snobelen and Mike Harris should see education as an essential priority and should stop bleeding the system of its financial resources to feed an income tax cut that benefits the wealthiest and most privileged to the greatest extent.

### HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

**Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold):** The Harris Conservatives' abandonment of public health care in this province involves, among other things, the shutdown of hospitals across the province, and more than a few right in Niagara region, including the Hotel Dieu, which has established itself as a vital part of the health care system for people in regional Niagara, especially the communities of St Catharines and, quite frankly, Thorold.

In response to the entirely unjustifiable recommendation that Hotel Dieu be shut down, Hotel Dieu itself prepared the report *Prescription for a Healthy Niagara*, released in May of this year. *Prescription for a Healthy Niagara* prescribes and recommends a system that provides better access to quality care at \$30 million less than the recommendations being made by the subcommittee of the district health council, but a mouthpiece for this particular government.

I tell you, that report has been distributed across Niagara region and people throughout all of Niagara are responding with great support. This is what Mrs M.M. has to say: "Closure of Hotel Dieu Hospital would deprive St Catharines and area residents of the high-quality services they now receive." Mr J.M. says, "Hotel Dieu's prescription is the only viable solution, economically and morally."

The fact is that these and hundreds of other people who have read the Hotel Dieu's report oppose Hotel Dieu's shutdown and demand that this government reverse its position on its abandonment of public —

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Thank you.

### EILEEN BAIN

**Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South):** It's my privilege today to stand in this House and recognize a very special Mississauga resident by the name of Eileen Bain. I'm grateful to Angela Blackburn in the Mississauga News, because I'm going to read directly from her article.

"The nurses call her 'Wonder Woman.'"

"They admittedly envy the energetic way that 90-year-old Eileen Bain wheels stretchers around the emergency ward at Mississauga Hospital.

"If you don't use it, you lose it," said the spunky volunteer, who took time out from her rounds last Thursday for a party celebrating her 90th birthday.

"Happy birthday, Mrs Bain. I wish I had an ounce of your energy," said ER nurse Julia Fisher.

"Mrs Bain is our oldest active volunteer. She's a real trooper and has more energy than all of us combined," said

Susan Zidaric-Seymour, head of community outreach programs for volunteer services.

"Eileen Bain has marked several other personal milestones this year, including 40 years of marriage and a quarter-century of volunteering at the hospital.

"It takes a special person to work in ER, but mere moments after meeting her, it's obvious why Eileen Bain is suited for the job.

"She brings intelligence, humour and a zest for life to her duties. She shows up for work sporting a T-shirt that boasts, 'I may grow old but I'll never grow up.'"

She is a role model for us all.

### REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

#### STANDING COMMITTEE ON RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT

**Mrs Brenda Elliott (Guelph):** I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on resources development and move its adoption.

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed?

**Clerk at the Table (Mr Todd Decker):** Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

Bill 99, An Act to secure the financial stability of the compensation system for injured workers, to promote the prevention of injury and disease in Ontario workplaces and to revise the Workers' Compensation Act and make related amendments to other Acts.

**The Speaker:** Shall the report be received and adopted?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

*The division bells rang from 1350 to 1355.*

**The Speaker:** All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

#### Ayes

Baird, John R.	Hamick, Charles	Runciman, Robert W.
Bassett, Isabel	Johnson, Bert	Sampson, Rob
Beaubien, Marcel	Johnson, David	Saunderson, William
Brown, Jim	Klees, Frank	Shea, Derwyn
Chudleigh, Ted	Leach, Al	Sheehan, Frank
Cunningham, Dianne	Marland, Margaret	Smith, Bruce
DeFaria, Carl	Maves, Bart	Snobelen, John
Doyle, Ed	Munro, Julia	Spina, Joseph
Ecker, Janet	Mushinski, Marilyn	Sterling, Norman W.
Elliott, Brenda	Ouellette, Jerry J.	Tilson, David
Flaherty, Jim	Palladini, Al	Tsubouchi, David H.
Ford, Douglas B.	Parker, John L.	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Froese, Tom	Pettit, Trevor	Wood, Bob
Gilchrist, Steve	Ross, Lillian	Young, Terence H.

**The Speaker:** All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

## Nays

Bartolucci, Rick	Gerretsen, John	Martin, Tony
Bradley, James J.	Grandmaître, Bernard	McLeod, Lyn
Brown, Michael A.	Gravelle, Michael	McLash, Frank
Caplan, David	Kennedy, Gerard	Morin, Gilles E.
Castrilli, Annamaria	Kormos, Peter	Phillips, Gerry
Christopherson, David	Kwinter, Monte	Pouliot, Gilles
Churley, Marilyn	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Pupatello, Sandra
Cleary, John C.	Lankin, Frances	Ramsay, David
Colle, Mike	Laughren, Floyd	Silipo, Tony
Cordiano, Joseph	Lessard, Wayne	Wildman, Bud
Cullen, Alex	Martel, Shelley	Wood, Len
Curling, Alvin		

**Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers):** The ayes are 42; the nays are 34.

**The Speaker:** I declare the motion carried.

Pursuant to the order of the House dated May 29, 1997, Bill 99 shall be ordered for third reading.

## INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

## EXOTIC ANIMALS CONTROL ACT, 1997

LOI DE 1997 SUR LA RÉGLEMENTATION  
DES ANIMAUX EXOTIQUES

Mr Parker moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 159, An Act to regulate the keeping of Exotic Animals / Projet de loi 159, Loi visant à réglementer la garde d'animaux exotiques.

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Is the motion carried? Carried.

**Mr John L. Parker (York East):** I didn't want anyone on the other side of the floor to take this bill personally, but it establishes a licensing system for persons who keep or have possession of live exotic animals.

**Mr John R. Baird (Nepean):** Your alligator shoes are okay.

**The Speaker:** Member for Nepean, come to order.

1400

## MOTIONS

## TIME ALLOCATION

**Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Government House Leader):** I seek unanimous consent to move a motion respecting time allocation on Bill 142 without notice.

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Unanimous consent for time allocation of Bill 142. Agreed? Agreed.

**Hon David Johnson:** I move that pursuant to standing order 46 and notwithstanding any other standing order or order of the House dated September 4, 1997, relating to Bill 142, An Act to revise the law related to Social Assistance by enacting the Ontario Works Act and the Ontario Disability Support Program Act, by repealing the Family Benefits Act, the Vocational Rehabilitation

Services Act and the General Welfare Assistance Act and by amending several other Statutes;

The standing committee on social development be authorized to meet to consider the bill for the purpose of conducting public hearings for two days at its regularly scheduled meeting times during the week of September 29, 1997, and from 6:30 pm to 9:30 pm on those same days; and

That the committee be further authorized to meet to consider the bill for the purposes of conducting public hearings for four days during the next recess;

That all amendments shall be filed with the clerk of the committee by 5 pm on the fifth calendar day following the final day of the public hearings on the bill;

That the committee shall be further authorized to meet for two days during the abovenoted recess for clause-by-clause consideration of the bill, and that the committee shall be authorized to meet beyond its normal hour of adjournment on the second day until completion of clause-by-clause consideration. At 5:00 pm on the second day of clause-by-clause consideration, those amendments which have not yet been moved shall be deemed to have been moved, and the Chair of the committee shall interrupt the proceedings and shall, without further debate or amendment, put every question necessary to dispose of all remaining sections of the bill and any amendments thereto. Any divisions required shall be deferred until all remaining questions have been put and shall be taken in succession with one 20-minute waiting period allowed pursuant to standing order 127(a);

That the committee shall report the bill to the House on the first available day following completion of clause-by-clause consideration that reports from committees may be received. In the event that the committee fails to report the bill on the date provided, the bill shall be deemed to be passed by the committee and shall be deemed to be reported to and received by the House;

That upon receiving the report of the standing committee on social development, the Speaker shall put the question for adoption of the report forthwith, and at such time the bill shall be ordered for third reading;

That one sessional day shall be allotted to the third reading stage of the bill. At 5:45 pm or 9:15 pm, as the case may be on such day, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and shall put every question necessary to dispose of this stage of the bill without further debate or amendment;

That in the case of any division relating to any proceeding on the bill, the division bell shall be limited to five minutes.

**The Speaker:** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. I declare the motion carried.

## MARGARET SCRIVENER

**Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Environment and Energy):** I seek unanimous consent of the Legislature to pay tribute to a former member of the Legislature, Margaret Scrivener.

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Unanimous consent? Agreed.

**Hon Mr Sterling:** This morning I, along with some 500 to 600 people, attended a funeral for the late Margaret Scrivener at St James Cathedral. Along with myself and many of my colleagues presently in the Legislature, there were many former members of the Legislature at that funeral.

The funeral service was called "A Celebration of the Life of Margaret Mary Scrivener." I can truly say to you, Mr Speaker, after listening to the eulogies there, that it was a celebration of the life of a very extraordinary individual, Margaret Scrivener.

Margaret Scrivener was an activist. She was involved in volunteerism; she was involved in environmental issues; she was involved in her community; she was involved in farming, in having a farm out in Durham county which coincidentally is now occupied by the present member, Julia Munro, the member for Durham-York. She occupies the farmhouse where Margaret Scrivener's farm once was under operation in the 1960s.

As many of you know, of course, and perhaps more relevant to the Legislature of Ontario, Margaret became a member of the Legislature of Ontario in 1971 and was re-elected four times in the riding of St David. Margaret was one of the pioneering women who have occupied seats in the Legislature. It was not common at that time to have a great number of women, or the number of women we have in the Legislature now.

This morning I heard the story of how she got the nomination for the Progressive Conservative Party in the St David riding. She went downtown to talk to the party officials and they wanted her to run in some other ridings which were not as kind to Progressive Conservative candidates as perhaps the St David riding was. Margaret decided, as she was wont to do, that she lived in the St David riding, she had represented those interests as the president of a ratepayers' group, had been involved in the urban planning council of Metro Toronto during the 1960s and was actually the vice-chairman of that group, and that she was going to run there. That was the hallmark of her character and that was the personality trait of being a very determined person. As she went through her political career, she exhibited that tendency time and time again.

She obtained for her riding down in Regent Park one of the first health care clinics for that community, at a time when health care clinics were unusual. We're talking about the early 1970s when they were not as commonplace as they are across the province now. She persisted and persisted in demanding that for her constituents, and it was through her work that one of the first health care clinics in Ontario was put into two converted apartments

down in Regent Park, and that health care clinic still operates today for the people of that area of Toronto.

Margaret Scrivener was a very public and private person, kind of an odd combination. Dr Bette Stephenson, who was a former Minister of Education in the Legislature, always mused that Margaret Scrivener remained in politics for some 14 years, yet managed to keep her age a mystery, notwithstanding that each and every one of us has our names printed in various directories and we're constantly being asked for details about our background and our age and all those kinds of things. Margaret Scrivener kept that very close to her.

I didn't realize it when I was a colleague of hers back from 1977 when I first came to this Legislature until 1985, but at that time Margaret was suffering from breast cancer and suffered that disease for some 25 years. I guess that was another hallmark of her character, that she never sought pity.

1410

She was a very, very substantial person in terms of trying to accomplish things. Her family talked about her sickness, that it was a bother to her but that she never let it impede her in her determination to accomplish many things during her lifetime.

She served as a member of the Legislature, and then in 1975 became Minister of Government Services and Minister of Revenue for a period of time in the Bill Davis government.

After she left politics in 1985, she became the chairman of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board of Ontario. I can tell you that I had many conversations with her after that on her attempt to improve compensation, particularly for children who had been victims of crimes across this province.

One of the tributes paid this morning in church by the former Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, the Honourable Hal Jackman, was that he described Margaret Scrivener as a person who was not a consensus builder. Margaret would size up a situation, she would make a determination and then point herself in that direction, and woe be to anyone who got in the road of that train that was coming down the track, because she was determined and she won many, many fights in terms of driving to what I believe were very significant achievements and ends for the people she represented.

She was known as an environmentalist for saving the ravines in the area she represented, and that was one of her hallmarks before she entered politics.

Today at St James Cathedral in Toronto I believe we really did celebrate the life of a very tremendous person, a person we should all look up to and try to take some of the very positive achievements she had, some of the energy she had and achieve some of the things she did for her constituents. She was a politician to be admired.

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** On behalf of the Liberal caucus, I would like to convey our condolences to the Scrivener family, to the immediate members of the family, to the relatives and to the friends of Margaret Scrivener.

I had the opportunity to serve in this Legislature with Mrs Scrivener and certainly recall her contribution very well.

Sometimes the headline of an article in a newspaper captures what a person is about. I notice the obituary in the *Toronto Star* on September 14 started off by saying, "Margaret Scrivener was a complex figure — a hard-headed Tory politician, champion of the environment, feminist and defender of the downtrodden." Indeed, we would all remember her in each one of those particular responsibilities. I remember as well that she was a great believer in voluntarism, in having people, those in a position to do so particularly, assist others within the community. In positions of leadership, she was able to make that contribution to her constituents and to everyone in the province.

She was also interested very much in planning, which we recall in the 1970s and 1980s was a matter of great contention and great debate. Margaret believed very much that there should be orderly planning in our communities and that part of that planning should include a good deal of green space. She was not to take a step backward when it came to defending that green space and her principles as they related to planning.

She was also at one time — I think a lot of people didn't know — a reporter for the *Toronto Telegram*, dealing with stories of war. Certainly she would have seen the very great challenges that are faced during wartime.

She also, in her days at home, was able to play the piano with a good deal of competence. It mentions that she loved to play Chopin and Mozart and had three pianos with different voices in her home. So you can see she had a very great love of music.

She was a valued member not only of her constituency of St David, where she was very popular and returned time after time when she went to the electorate, but also an important member of the cabinet of William Davis, entering the cabinet I think in 1975 and serving as Minister of Government Services and Minister of Revenue. I can recall those two portfolios.

You had to know Margaret, and I think Norm Sterling mentioned in the latter part of his remarks that Margaret was not one to head for the centre in terms of a position, a consensus position. She did indeed look carefully at the issues and then she made up her mind what direction she was heading in. There were many people who would step aside, even within the cabinet itself, as she moved forward. I'm sure there were a few bruised ankles in the Conservative cabinet of people who wouldn't want to do as Margaret suggested they should, because she was very determined. She believed very much in what she was doing.

Those of us in the opposition remember her with admiration as a fierce partisan. There was no doubt that Margaret was a Tory through and through and that the opposition was indeed the enemy in a political sense, and that if you were going to take Margaret Scrivener on in a verbal battle in the House, you knew you could count on all the guns to be ablaze from the other side, because she

was a very determined person and a loyalist to the cabinet and to her colleagues and very much admired in that regard.

If you wanted to confront Margaret, I always suggested to my colleagues that you put on the armour because she was always armed with a lot of good arguments herself and was vociferous in putting those arguments forward.

I am sure that her family will miss her very much, her friends will miss her very much and the people of the community will miss her very much. She will be remembered for many years to come for the service she rendered to the people of Toronto and to the people of Ontario.

**Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt):** I rise on behalf of my caucus to pay tribute to Margaret Scrivener, who passed away last week.

Margaret and I were elected in the same year, 1971, and it does seem like a while ago. There were many times when I would listen to Margaret, largely in committees, when I was impressed by the large number of topics in which she had an interest and quite frankly some expertise and did not hesitate to express them in committee. That's reflected in the number of careers she had as well: To go from journalism to politics to real estate and silk farming indicates a lively mind and a real interest in the world around here.

She had a patrician bearing but seemed to know when to park that and deal with the real problems of the world around her. I know that she was considered a very tough boss and that if you were on her personal staff or if you were senior in the bureaucracy, you'd better measure up. She was very demanding, but she also demanded a lot of herself, and I think that's what allowed people to cope with that.

I can recall that on many occasions on committees we would engage in differences of opinion, because from time to time she and I differed on matters. I am trying to remember if I won any of those exchanges. My memory doesn't serve me well in that regard.

I can recall as well that one beautiful summer evening here in Toronto there was a reception at our local yacht club. I felt that I had an obligation to understand what my constituents were missing by not having a yacht club in the constituency, so I took myself off to that reception at the yacht club.

I was greeted at the yacht club by Margaret Scrivener, who took me under her wing and acted as my escort and companion and guide for the evening. I think she recognized — and I mean this quite seriously — that I was out of my element at that yacht club and she introduced me to all sorts of people and gave me a running history of the yacht club and some of the personalities who had helped build it into a successful yacht club.

I regarded that as an act of kindness and I didn't forget that, because she didn't do it as though she was showing off her yacht club; that is not the way in which the evening was conducted. In politics, we don't forget those things, when people are kind to us.

On behalf of my caucus I would simply say that Margaret Scrivener made a big contribution to public life in

this province. She was very tough-minded and, as my friend from Carleton said, she was not a consensus builder but at the same time many of us respected that. When you got into an exchange with Margaret Scrivener, you knew that she was going to put her case very well and she wouldn't play any tricks on you. What you saw was what you got, and that didn't change as the debate went on, and the tactics were always straight ahead as well. So on behalf of my caucus, I extend condolences to Margaret's family and to her friends. She'll be missed by many.

**The Speaker:** Thanks to the members. I'll make sure these remarks are passed on to the immediate family.

1420

## STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

### MUNICIPAL ELECTION

**Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing):** The municipalities within Metropolitan Toronto have approached the chief election officer, Warren Bailie, with requests that questions be put on the November 10 municipal election ballot.

Mr Bailie has given the opinion that the City of Toronto Act does not allow this, because the individual municipalities do not exist for the purpose of municipal election. He suggested that the government consider making a regulation to address this transitional issue.

The councils of Toronto and Scarborough have also asked the government of Ontario to see if a regulation could be put in place to permit these questions.

Today I am pleased to inform the House that the municipalities in Metro Toronto will be able to place questions on the election ballot this November.

These questions were put forward in good faith. We believe that municipalities should be able to poll their voters on election day. It's something many municipalities have done in the past as a cost-effective way to gauge public opinion. In fact, it was our government that made changes to the Municipal Elections Act last year to make it easier for all municipalities to put questions on the municipal ballot.

I am happy to say we intend to make a regulation under the Municipal Elections Act within the next few weeks to ensure that these questions, and others in restructuring municipalities across Ontario, can go on the ballot this November. We will leave it up to the existing municipalities to decide what questions they want to put on the ballot.

The regulation will allow each of the Metro municipalities to decide which questions they want to ask of voters within their old boundaries. The deadline for them to give their questions to the chief election officer is September 30.

This is a unique election and the first in the history of the new city of Toronto. As we move closer to January 1,

1998, we will continue to deal with transition issues like this as they arise.

**Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood):** I hope the minister doesn't ridicule this referendum. I hope the minister doesn't ignore, like he ignored the 400,000 people in Metro, the 76% who said no to his megacity. I hope he has learned his lesson. I hope he doesn't try to refute the results of the referendum; I hope he doesn't try and demean the referendum. It's about time.

I also ask the minister to listen to another request. As you know, there has been a major foul-up in Bill 103 where the borough of East York only has two representatives. They've asked for a third representative so they would have a voice at the table.

As you've made this change, listening to the referenda, I hope you realize that the people of East York deserve the third member. The city of York, with approximately the same population, has four members on the megacity council; East York only has two. Here's an opportunity for you, Minister, to show that you really listened and allow for a third representative to sit on the megacity so the people of East York could have a voice, because they deserve to be represented. Do the right thing and add that third member for East York before the elections take place. Do it now and let the people of East York be heard.

**Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands):** Since you're in such a good mood and you want to pass all these regulations, Minister, I've got a few others I'd like you to pass between now and election day.

How about passing a regulation that you're not going to invoke all the police charges to the various communities of the province? It's about \$182 million worth. There are actually municipalities that are going to have to pay something like \$60,000 or \$80,000 for police services they've never had; they've never had them, and you're making the smaller municipalities pay for that.

How about invoking a regulation which will revoke the municipal support grant of \$665 million? If you revoke that particular downloading, at least a lot of the municipalities would feel an awful lot better about meeting their budgetary requirements next year.

How about making a regulation that revokes the downloading of all those roads and highways? In eastern Ontario we're going to be left with four highways: Highway 7, the 401, the 416 and Highway 62 north of Belleville. All the other roads are going to be local roads, and the local municipalities simply are not able to pay for them.

How about a regulation that revokes the downloading of ambulance costs in this province? That's a cost municipalities have never paid for, and you are invoking those charges against the smallest municipalities, which can't possibly afford them.

How about a regulation that revokes the downloading of the health unit costs? That's a health service; it should be paid for by the Ministry of Health. Why is that being downloaded on local municipalities? We're talking about something like \$225 million.

How about invoking Bill 156, which calls for the direct election of the chair of the region of Sudbury? Why aren't you doing that?

There are so many regulations that you can invoke and thereby right the wrongs you have committed on the municipalities of this province.

There are a couple of other transitional issues we'd like you to take care of. We would like you to take care of the educational financing. Nobody in the province really knows what that's going to be like, who is going to pay for what and what the municipalities will get with respect to that.

How about the assessment rolls? The different municipalities are being told they will not get their new assessment rolls based on the new property tax system until at least March or April of next year. They want to know what their situation is by the time they do their budgeting in January.

While you're in the mood to pass all these regulations, undo some of the harm you have done to this province and that you've done to the municipalities of this province. I've got a file here. This is just one week of clippings of municipalities that are saying that their tax loads are going to significantly increase because of —

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Thank you. Your time has expired.

1430

**Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt):** In responding to the Minister of Municipal Affairs' statement, I think very much of the phrase, "You don't know whether to laugh or cry." Listening to the minister, it's really hard to take this announcement today seriously at all. You have a situation in which once again the minister has had to stand up and admit — although if you read his words or listened to them you'd never believe it — that he has screwed up one more time. Now he has had to come into the House and admit that by putting in a regulation to put back into place a power he took out by ramming through Bill 103 and by ramming through, as he intends to do, Bill 148, which is going to have a total of nine hours of committee hearings over the next couple of weeks. That is what happens when you make bad decisions and when you compound that bad decision-making by your insistence that you're the only one who knows what's right and what's best.

I'm glad you're making this regulation change. I'm glad the municipalities in Metropolitan Toronto, for the last time in their individual capacities, will have the opportunity to decide what issues they should put on to the ballot in the form of referenda. But I don't expect any of those are going to make one iota of difference to you and to your government, because if that were the case, you would have listened, this minister particularly would have listened, to the one major referendum that was important. That's the one which you want to pretend didn't exist, the one in which the people of Metropolitan Toronto said to you very clearly and very strongly that they didn't want your megacity. Yet they're getting it, because once again your attitude was and continues to be that you know best.

You know best, despite what the people say, despite what the people want.

I'm glad to see that municipalities will have, through this regulation change, the ability to put on the ballot such questions as: What do people think of the download? How are we going to cope with the situation this government and this minister have caused? I think it will be useful for the people of Toronto to express themselves one more time, but at the end of the day the only point that will be made is the point that has been made time and time again, that Mike Harris and Al Leach don't listen, that Mike Harris and Al Leach don't care two hoots about what the people in Metropolitan Toronto have to say.

We're going to see that compounded throughout the process, as we have seen so far. We're going to see that continue in spades, because that's the one sure thing you can say about Al Leach and Mike Harris when it comes to many issues, certainly when it comes to the issue of the creation of the megacity in Metropolitan Toronto: that they're the ones who know best. They don't care about the fact that 80% of the people across Metropolitan Toronto have said no. They're just going to continue to impose their will, even to the extent that when the minister finally has to come to this Legislature and admit that he's fixing a mistake he caused by his actions, he does it in this round-about way, in saying he believes municipalities should be able to poll their voters on election day, even applauding himself for having made it easier for municipalities to hold referenda, those same referenda that he continues to ignore.

**Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine):** I just want to take the last few minutes of our response to comment on a couple of issues with respect to this. Like my colleague, I'm glad to see that the problem the minister caused, the minister is now fixing. That is useful.

I too wonder what the results of this will be. I know that in the cities of Toronto and Scarborough right now councils are contemplating putting referenda questions on the municipal ballot with respect to charitable gaming casinos and video slot machines. I want to know from the minister, what happens if the people vote no? Will the provincial government abandon its plans to run roughshod over communities that have said they don't want these charitable gaming casinos in their neighbourhoods? What's the response of the government going to be? Will it be like the government's response to the overwhelming no to the megacity?

The ability to have the referendum question placed is an important one and I'm glad you fixed your mistake there. The bottom line is going to be, will you listen? Your record to date has been of a government that refuses to listen to people, that moves ahead so quickly, that makes mistakes, that doesn't understand the consequences of its actions because it doesn't take the time to listen.

Minister, I am hoping that if these questions are on the ballot and if the answer comes back a resounding no, this time you will listen. I can tell you there are people in neighbourhoods all across Metropolitan Toronto, certainly already organized within the city of Scarborough and the

city of Toronto, who are saying no to expanded gambling, who are saying no to your charity casinos and to your video slot machines. They don't want it in their neighbourhoods. We'll wait and see whether you'll listen to them.

## ORAL QUESTIONS

### YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT

**Mr Joseph Cordiano (Lawrence):** I have a question for the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. Yesterday you stood up in this House and wanted to take all the credit for attracting new investment to Canada. In fact, you even boasted about how your Market Ontario campaign is the sole reason that companies are choosing to locate in Ontario. You wanted people to believe that is the answer to our problems.

There's one problem you have failed to address, that in fact you've completely ignored. I want to ask you today, Minister, with youth unemployment rates running at around 16%, where is your plan for the young people of this province? What exactly are you and your ministry doing to help the young people of this province?

**Hon William Saunderson (Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism):** In response to that question, I first of all would like to clarify one thing. I did not say that anything that we had done was the prime reason why anything had happened in this province. I said that it certainly had helped, but I can tell you that it was not the sole reason. If you got that from what I said, you're quite wrong about that, I can tell you that.

First of all, what I'd like to say to the member is this, about any kind of jobs: What we need to have is the right climate in Ontario, and that's what we're creating in this province. As you know, we have cut the personal income tax rate, and I keep coming back to that again and again. That will keep our bright young people in this province. I have spoken to many of the high-technology industries throughout this province and they have said to me that one of the best ways to keep young people in the province and create jobs for them is to have low personal tax rates.

**Mr Cordiano:** You know, you just don't get it. You can play around with the numbers all you want. The fact is that young unemployed people in this province are having a difficult time trying to find jobs. In fact, your government is hurting young people by cutting off the very opportunities that they need at this time.

I want to remind you that during all of this period of time, you sat and did nothing while the Minister of Education allowed tuition fees to become the second highest in this country and university funding to become the lowest. According to a vice-president who deals with student loans at the Royal Bank, your government is threatening to put more and more students into bankruptcy by forcing them to take on huge debts.

Minister, you're doing absolutely nothing to ensure that the young people of this province are getting those opportunities they need, educational opportunities that are so critical to our success. I want to ask you again, what is it that you and your ministry are doing to help the young people of this province? What are you doing?

**Hon Mr Saunderson:** In response to that supplementary question, I'd like to tell the member that youth employment was up in August for the fourth straight month, jumping by 16,000 people; 37,000 net new jobs for youth have been created in the last four months.

The bottom line really is, since we've been elected, we have created over one quarter of a million jobs in this province. That speaks a lot for what's going on in this province.

As I said yesterday to the member for Sault Ste Marie, there were 33,000 new jobs created in August. I don't think we can stress this enough. I want people who are watching this show today to realize what we're doing in this province. We're creating jobs and economic development. How are we doing it? We're open for business and making it comfortable for businesses.

**Mr Cordiano:** Minister, you're spending \$50 million on promoting Market Ontario, a campaign which does nothing to help the young people of this province. You're hitting them from both ends. On the one hand, it's difficult for young people to find jobs; on the other, you've raised tuition fees so that they can't go on and get a post-secondary education.

I remind the minister that you are responsible for economic development in this province. I remind the minister that economic development includes the young people of this province. It's not good enough for you to sit back and hope that eventually something will trickle down to young people. It's your responsibility to see that economic development means just that for the young people of this province.

I ask you again, Minister: What are you and your ministry doing specifically to help the young people of this province?

**Hon Mr Saunderson:** Once again, we are creating the right environment for businesses to thrive, which means that will create jobs. What we want to create is the proper climate in this province. Let me say that unemployment in Ontario is now 8.2%, compared to 9% nationally. It continues to fall. That shows confidence by business. That will create jobs. Our urban housing starts are up 13.5% in the month of August. That's the highest level in five years. Listen to me.

Also, the Conference Board of Canada forecasts Ontario is going to outperform the rest of Canada in the next few years. Our growth, the GNP in this province, is higher than that of any of the G7 countries in this world. We're creating the right climate and that's what's going to create the jobs for old people and young people, and they should pay attention to that over there.

1440

### TEACHERS' COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

**Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William):** My question is for the Minister of Education. Minister, our leader asked you yesterday what you were prepared to do to head off a major confrontation with Ontario teachers, a confrontation which can only hurt students.

You assured us all that you are working very hard to make sure there is not a confrontation, but at this point, Minister, all we have from you is words, empty words and no action. You said you had had some consultations with teachers. That's not what the teachers would call it. You said that you've listened to teachers but you've given them nothing back except your bottom line: You want another billion dollars out of education.

Minister, when will you be going back to the bargaining table to have some serious discussions about how to avoid a destructive confrontation with teachers in this province?

**Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training):** I am surprised the member for Fort William would suggest that the government of Ontario go to province-wide bargaining with teachers. I wasn't aware of the fact that that was the position of your party. If it is the position of your party, you should state so publicly. It's not the position of this government and not the position of our party before the election or after. We believe that the issues should be bargained locally. That's where the best solutions are and that's where bargaining will be done.

**Mrs McLeod:** This is far too serious for the minister to be so silly about it. You know very well that this is not about province-wide bargaining. This is about your legislation that you have drafted, your proposals that are on the table, and your bottom line is to take a billion dollars out of education.

When the teachers came to that table and they sat down in good faith to try to negotiate some alternatives, they were faced with your non-negotiable bottom line. You had to have a billion dollars to give to the Minister of Finance to pay for Mike Harris's tax cut, a non-negotiable bottom line. So the teachers said: "Let us at least try to meet that bottom line without hurting the classroom. Let's look for some ways of feeding the Minister of Finance so he can show his budget cuts without taking services away from students.

Minister, you're going to deny that's what happened but that is true. You are working hard, you say, to avoid a confrontation, but the fact is, you have not gone back to the table, you have drafted legislation you want to pass before Thanksgiving. The clock is ticking and you are not talking to teachers. Is this the ultimate crisis you've been trying to create? Are you determined to sacrifice Ontario's students to pay for the tax cuts?

**Hon Mr Snobelen:** I am not sure there is a question in there to respond to and I hate to take up the member's time when she could be carrying on with these flights of fantasy

and empty rhetoric about what may or may not have happened.

What has happened is the staff in my ministry took the time to visit with and listen to the concerns of teachers, the people who bargain for teachers, the people who are the heads of the unions for teachers, the boards that represent the boards across the province, and to listen to their concerns as we go through a transition to a better education system. That's what happened. The member for Fort William can twist it and turn it any way she'd like and she can have whatever fantasy she'd like, but that's what's happened.

**Mrs McLeod:** Let me make it as clear as possible to the minister, who was not at the table. Maybe he didn't give directions to his representatives. They came in to talk and they were told, "Here's what the minister wants, here's what the Minister of Finance wants, here's what the Premier of Ontario wants, and here's our non-negotiable bottom line, including, we want a billion dollars out of the education budget."

The teachers still came back. In spite of this totally non-consultative, demanding, absolutely non-negotiable bottom-line approach you took, they came back and said, "Let's find some alternatives." They propose that you look at some use of the surplus in the teacher pension funds.

As you know, you co-manage that fund. You both contribute to it. The teachers said, "Maybe we can feed the dollars into the Treasurer's budget from that fund without taking \$1 billion out of the classroom," which is surely what has to be avoided. Your own commissioner said, "Look at that alternative, because you must not take more money out of the classroom."

Minister, you said again this morning that the teachers' pension fund was very healthy. You said it might have as much as \$10 billion in surplus funds by the year 2000. You said no to that alternative last week.

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Question.

**Mrs McLeod:** Are you now prepared to look at using some of the teacher pension funds to meet the bottom line the finance minister has given you, or do you insist on taking \$1 billion out of the classroom and —

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

**Hon Mr Snobelen:** There are some estimates that the teachers' pension fund, which we do co-manage with the Ontario Teachers' Federation, will have a surplus of \$10 billion by the year 2000, an extraordinary amount of money. Obviously, everyone wants to see the pensions managed in a way that's good, that guarantees the benefits to teachers when they retire. We'll make sure that happens first and foremost.

We have, as you know, put forward in the budget a provision for \$250 million, which we hope will be matched by the pension fund, to provide early retirement for teachers in our system so that young teachers who would like to get into the system can. We have been discussing this with the Ontario Teachers' Federation for quite some period of time; we will continue to talk with them about it. We hope we can come up with a program that will allow for a graceful retirement of those who

would like to leave teaching a little early. We will be looking forward to doing that with the Ontario Teachers' Federation as soon as we can.

**The Speaker:** Answer, please.

**Hon Mr Snobelen:** I must one more time tell the member for Fort William that our objective here is to have the best system of education for our students and to make sure they have the funding to provide that system —

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

### EDUCATION FINANCING

**Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma):** I have a question for the same minister. I'd like to bring the topic back to the reason for education in the province, that is, the students.

Thousands of Ontario children are back at school in their third week and are rapidly learning the hard realities and the uncertainties of the invent-a-crisis education system we have in this province today. At the high school level, students all across the province are finding they can't participate in school activities unless they pay user fees, ranging from \$20 to \$40. At the elementary level, students are learning very quickly to become salespeople. They're having to sell subscriptions to magazines or sell chocolate bars to pay for art supplies and other school supplies.

How many arts supplies and textbooks and school supplies could the Minister of Education buy with the \$1 million he is using to flog his propaganda in every household in Ontario? How much could we have done for education with that \$1 million?

**Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training):** I thank the member for Algoma for the question. I would like to point out that we have specifically not provided for user fees in education. We've actually taken on the responsibility of funding the majority of costs in our education system, although that was suggested to your government when you were in power and has been suggested by any number of commissions over the last 20 years. We actually have taken that step to protect education in the province.

As for what it costs to put out this information piece to the people across Ontario, I'd leave it to the member for Algoma to speculate about how much this might cost versus this full-colour, multipage brochure put out by his government in its final year, with a picture of the then minister, the signature of the minister, his message. I'd suggest this is perhaps a little more expensive than that, and perhaps the member for Algoma can explain that.

**Mr Wildman:** Our government wasn't taking \$1.5 billion out of the classroom after promising not to affect classroom education in this province.

*Interjections.*

**Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton North):** What about the social contract?

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Members for Brampton North and Etobicoke-Humber.

1450

**Mr Wildman:** I'd like to quote Lynda Murtha, the chair of the Simcoe County Board of Education, who is certainly not known to be a supporter of the opposition parties. She says: "I only wish that before they" — meaning the Conservatives — "made their decision the government had a vision and a plan for their changes, had worked through the details and stages of change with the involved partners and, finally, took the necessary time to properly make the change. I am extremely worried about the future of education and education funding in Ontario."

Ms Murtha is not alone. This government is pushing the school system and the people of this province, the students and the parents, to the brink. What steps is the minister taking to avoid a confrontation with the teachers of this province, endangering the school year for Ontario children?

**Hon Mr Snobelen:** I thought the member for Algoma might have known that we are working on the allocation model with expert panels — we have received some of those reports and we're receiving more — so we have broad consultation with people in education and make sure we get the funding formula right. I thought he would have known that we announced last spring that there would be stable funding through this transition period to make sure that no programs would be hurt, to make sure that no child in the classroom would feel the effects of the transition. We've taken that extraordinary step to do that.

I thought he would have the humility of remembering that during the social contract class sizes were negotiated up in Ontario. We are working now to bring class sizes down, or at least to end the time when they've been growing while you were in government. I'd also remind the member for Algoma that your government left every student in this province with a \$41,000 debt.

**Mr Wildman:** Since the minister refers to his expert panels, he will know that this morning the education improvement commissioner stated that school boards will face a shortfall when the government sets the revenue levels for each board. The Education Improvement Commission has asked the government to consider phasing in the changes in finance over a five-year period, because they point out that there have been significant cuts to classroom education over the last number of months.

Since the minister is referring to his expert panels, will he follow this recommendation from this panel re education funding, and when will he make that decision clear to us in the Legislature, to the parents and the students, the teachers and the taxpayers of this province so we end this uncertainty and perhaps avoid the confrontation that he seems hell-bent on bringing about in this province?

**Hon Mr Snobelen:** I'm pleased to report to the member for Algoma that we will wait until we have all the expert panel reports in and then we will go out and talk to people across the province about what is necessary in the allocation model so we can meet the needs of every individual student. We call that consultation. You may call that foot-dragging. We think it's important to get this right, and that's why we provided a stable year during this

transition where the funding is guaranteed at the levels we started the school year at. We took that step a full six months ago to make sure that the education system knew that. We are now working with the experts to make sure we get this right, because it's important that we have the right funding formula for a system of education that will lift our students' performance instead of letting it drag down, as your government did.

#### WORKERS' COMPENSATION

**Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre):** My question is to the Minister of Labour. You will by now know that the public hearing portion, small as it was, has now ended on Bill 99. Of course it ended as it began, with outraged injured workers recoiling in horror at what you're about to do to injured workers and their families and their quality of life.

Yesterday, while your majority on the committee was ramming through over 250 amendments, we heard from your government amendment that you were now taking your draconian time limits and making them retroactive to all injured worker decisions prior to the passing of this law.

Minister, nobody at the hearings asked for that. You didn't put it in the draft law. You never indicated at any point that you were going to make it retroactive. Then, when we had an opportunity to debate it yesterday, your parliamentary assistant refused to allow that amendment to be brought forward in the meagre time limit left to deal with it publicly.

Why are you doing this to injured workers?

**Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Labour):** I just want to share with the member, and certainly all members, the fact that the reforms we have introduced and the reforms that have presently been debated in the committee represent a very balanced set of solutions to address the problems of the workers' compensation system. In fact, what they are going to do is ensure the financial viability of the Workers' Compensation Board, because they will enable us to eliminate the \$10.2-billion unfunded liability by the year 2014. They're also going to enable us to continue to provide fair and very sensitive coverage for the injured workers, and we know this is very consistent with what has been happening across the Dominion of Canada.

**Mr Christopherson:** What a load, Minister. Let me tell you you've got a lot of nerve continuing to use the word "fair" in this place when you talk about what you're doing to injured workers when you're taking the word "fair" out of the existing law. You've got a lot of nerve standing there saying "fair and balanced" when you're taking the word out and you're also taking \$15 billion out of the pockets of injured workers, at the same time giving \$6 billion of that back to your corporate pals, who, by the way, owe the unfunded liability you're talking about in the first place.

But my question to you was specifically around the retroactivity of the draconian time limits. Two things are going to happen as a result. Those who hear about it will

flood the system, and are you prepared to deal with that? Second, those who don't hear about it will lose the existing right they now have to file an appeal when they have the information they need to do it.

My question to you, Minister, is, why are you continuing to treat injured workers with such contempt and why did you sneak-attack with this retroactivity amendment?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** There was never any attempt not to do things as the things were going to be. In fact, I would indicate to you that the legislation we have before us is quite different from what you did to injured workers. As you will recall, you took \$18 million out of the system. We will certainly continue to ensure that the system we have now established is a system which is going to provide better service to injured workers.

We have totally revamped the WCB. We are very confident that as a result of the goals we have set for the injured worker system, that is, a 30% reduction in lost-time injury over five years, there are going to be far fewer injured workers in the future than ever before. Our priority in all of this restructuring is to focus on prevention; it is to focus the energies of the WCB on health and safety. It's the first time that any government has set for itself a measurable target. In our regard, we've set 30%, and we are confident that's going to reduce the amount of hardship.

**Mr Christopherson:** Once again, Minister, your reputation is solid: You refuse to answer a single pointed question in this place. You always go back to the mantra, you always go back to the words, but the words are empty; it's your actions that speak volumes of what this government is all about. You killed the royal commission that looked into making sure that the WCB worked the way it ought to: for injured workers. You're the one taking 5% of the net income out of the pockets of injured workers and their families at the same time you cut the premiums your corporate friends pay into WCB by the same 5%. You're the one killing the Occupational Disease Panel. You're the one putting in time limitations that will deny thousands of workers' claims. You're the one denying occupational stress. You're the one who's going to put time limits on chronic pain. Issue after issue in Bill 99 is going after injured workers, and they've had enough. Minister, do the right thing: Kill Bill 99.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** I'm sure we would like to respond by saying that the consultation process on Bill 99 has been extremely useful. We had the opportunity to receive the advice —

**Mr Christopherson:** You wrote it in secret.

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Order. Member for Hamilton Centre, you must allow the minister to answer. I ask you to come to order, please. Minister.

1500

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Maybe I should just remind the member opposite of some of the motions we made to amend the bill that was tabled in order to demonstrate that we were able to respond to the concerns that had been expressed. As members well know, we were able to extend WC benefits to hundreds of remarried survivors of

workers who were killed on the job. Unfortunately, these people who had remarried before 1985 had been deprived of these benefits. This was a problem which had not been dealt with by the NDP, who could have dealt with the problem of benefits for these individuals.

The other change we've made is we are very concerned about chronic pain and we have made a conscious decision to conduct —

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

#### ONTARIO HYDRO

**Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew North):** My question is to the Minister of both Energy and Environment, and it concerns the Hydro recovery plan, what I'll called the Bill Farlinger plan. Last week in Albany the Governor of New York state, Governor Pataki, issued —

**Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke-Rexdale):** He is a Republican.

**Mr Conway:** A Republican, as our friend from Etobicoke observes. Governor Pataki expressed very high levels of concern about the negative impacts that the Farlinger plan was going to have on the public health and the environment of communities like Buffalo in his state. Minister, what are you going to tell, or what have you told, Governor Pataki as to what he can expect from the Farlinger plan?

**Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Environment and Energy):** I spoke last week before Governor Pataki put out his press release and talked to his environmental commissioner, whom I met in April, with regard to the Governor's concern. I understand the Governor's concern, because we are all too well aware of transboundary pollution, particularly in the southwestern portion of our province.

I indicated to Governor Pataki that none of our reactors had closed down, as was alleged by him at this point in time, that we were having a parliamentary committee to look at this particular matter and that I understood very much his concern about the increase in fossil fuel and my efforts to try to avoid using fossil fuel if that's at all possible for us.

**Mr Conway:** Who would have thought we would live long enough in Ontario to have a right-wing, Republican Governor of New York publicly wringing his hands about Ontario doing things that were going to pollute Buffalo. Think about that. I thought I had heard it all, I thought I had seen it all. Just a few short months ago we were told that Ontario is now the third-worst polluting jurisdiction in North America, right up there with Texas and Tennessee.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Conway:** The minister says we're wrong. The Farlinger plan intends to pour hundreds of thousands of tonnes of new emissions, most of which will be sulphur dioxide, not just on Buffalo and Schenectady, but on Barrie, on Oakville, on Pembroke, for all I know.

The question I have for you, Minister of Environment, is, what have you told the Ontario Minister of Energy to tell Bill Farlinger about the very serious concerns that

thoughtful people everyone, including the Governor of New York, have about the excesses of the Farlinger plan?

**Hon Mr Sterling:** The report that the member refers to relates to the year 1994. Significant things have happened in Ontario since 1994, so you're talking old history with regard to that particular report. We are continuing to analyse that report with regard to its accuracy.

Number two, Ontario Hydro will live within its regulations as required with regard to emissions, but we were left with a significant problem here in Ontario. Because of past actions of all previous governments of all political stripes, we have a problem with nuclear safety, nuclear power in this province. There's one of two answers: We either turn on the lights or we don't have the power to turn those lights on.

**The Speaker:** Answer, please.

**Hon Mr Sterling:** Therefore, we are between a rock and a hard place with regard to environmental concerns, and that is what the committee will be looking at —

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

#### FRANCHISE BUSINESSES

**Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie):** My question is for the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations. We've been trying to get you to take action to guarantee fairness in franchise operations for over two years now. You make promises that you're going to do something, but then nothing happens. I've introduced a private member's bill. You said you would table legislation. I've brought franchisees before this place who are now out of business.

Today courageous franchise operators Les and Terry Stewart appeared at a news conference here at Queen's Park to tell their story. They're in the members' gallery now to hear your answer. They say the legislation I've been calling for would give them at least a fair chance. For them and other small operators of franchises in Ontario, will you act to protect small business and families in this province?

**Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations):** I have to point out, first of all, that this is a government that believes in and supports small business. We've cut a lot of red tape, left, evidently, by the other parties. We've introduced a number of changes that really will support small business, but I'm not going to dwell on that.

We have been working on franchise legislation. We have been working with both franchisors and franchisees to come forward with a consensus piece, something that will address the concerns of franchisees and at the same time ensure that we continue to support business in Ontario.

Having met with both the Canadian Franchise Association and the Ontario Franchisee Coalition, they've identified a number of concerns, including disclosure requirements, a code of ethics and the right to associate. These are all parts of upcoming legislation that we support.

I think what's important here is that we're bringing forward legislation that really is coming forward as the

consensus from the industry as a whole. Second, I think it's important for us to bring forward the right solution for Ontario, and this is what we're doing.

**Mr Martin:** This is a bit of déjà vu all over again. This is a huge and growing issue. The only reason we don't hear more stories about this is because of the intimidation and gag orders that stop franchisees from speaking out. It's especially important to large numbers of new Canadians who put their savings into franchise businesses when they come to this country and are often at the mercy of the franchisor. There is a role for government here.

When I asked you about this a year ago, this is what you said: "I've asked my staff to restart their efforts to get moving on franchise legislation. I think it's very important." It seems to me that's what you said again today. A year later, you've done absolutely nothing, and people like Les and Terry Stewart are paying the price of your inaction. When will your government listen to these small business owners and introduce legislation to guarantee fairness in the franchise industry in Ontario?

**Hon Mr Tsubouchi:** I don't agree with the characterization that we've done nothing. We've been working with franchisees and the franchisee organizations to come forward with legislation that will have an impact that they're looking for.

I know the member is well intentioned, but I think he has forgotten a lot of the high jinks that have occurred in this Legislature which have delayed the passage of good legislation.

I agree with the member when he said that this is déjà vu all over again. I will remind him that back when their government was in power, the then Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations, the member for Riverdale, said in 1993: "If, when the Liberals were in power, they had moved ahead with legislation, possibly the problem we're looking at now wouldn't be happening. The issue is that even if we passed legislation today, it wouldn't resolve this specific problem."

Yet, in the two years you had after that, you did nothing. At least we're moving forward with the franchisees, trying to come up with something that makes some sense.

1510

#### PHARMACISTS' DISPENSING FEES

**Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener):** My question is to the minister responsible for seniors. Last week the Kitchener-Waterloo Record reported a practice which I find particularly offensive. It is a practice in which pharmacists are double billing. They are taking a prescription and breaking it down into batches, two or three, and they are then double billing or triple billing the Ontario drug benefit plan.

I wonder if you could comment on whether or not you find it offensive, and also whether or not you find that this is legal.

**Hon Cameron Jackson (Minister without Portfolio [Seniors Issues]):** I want to thank the member for the question. He raised it with me yesterday morning. We

immediately contacted the OPA, the Ontario Pharmacists' Association, and the Ontario College of Pharmacists to look into this matter. In fact, we had written to the college back in February and advised them of the potential for this kind of practice and they responded to say that they would monitor it and investigate every single complaint. The problem is, we had not received any complaints from the public in this regard. But I'm pleased to report that we also put out a memo to all pharmacists in the province in May giving them guidelines that we do not accept this practice.

Members of this House should know that part of the problem is that we're the only jurisdiction in Canada that allows the flexibility in charging the copay. It's against the law in every province to waive the copay. We believe the practice is precipitated because we allow pharmacists to waive the \$2 copay.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** Minister, what action are we going to take to enforce it?

**Hon Mr Jackson:** The truth is that we have a college of pharmacy in this province which is responsible for regulating the conduct of pharmacists, disciplining them, and for determining when illegal acts are occurring in the pharmacy. Now that we have bona fide complaints, they're all going to be investigated.

I want to reassure members of the House that over the course of the last year and a half, this government has advised pharmacy about the inappropriateness of this activity. We have the complete support and concurrence of the Ontario Pharmacists' Association and the college of pharmacy in order to ensure that this practice doesn't go on. I encourage all members when they find samples of this conduct going on to report them to the Ministry of Health or to the college of pharmacy, and appropriate action will be taken against those pharmacists.

#### TORONTO TRANSIT COMMISSION

**Mr Monte Kwinter (Wilson Heights):** My question is to the Minister of Transportation. On September 9, 1997, the Toronto Transit Commission voted to exercise an option with Nova Bus Corp to supply and deliver 100 diesel buses for \$41 million. These buses will be built by Nova in Roswell, New Mexico, utilizing 15,000 days of full-time work and 45,000 days of indirect work with suppliers. This contract was awarded on a non-competitive, sole-source basis; this despite a government policy which states that all provincially subsidized purchases must be on a non-inclusionary basis.

Given that there is an Ontario company, Orion Bus Industries, which has been the recipient of millions and millions of dollars to keep it viable, why was it excluded from the bidding, and why would you allow the exporting of 60,000 working days of work to the United States?

**Hon Al Palladini (Minister of Transportation):** I want to thank the member for his question. I certainly don't have all the details the member is referring to. I do know one thing: We have a free trade within North America. However, we don't seem to have a free trade

within the country of Canada. That's something the Minister of Economic Development and the Minister of Labour are trying to correct.

But I just want to address your question. As far as the purchase of these buses, I believe that municipalities should have the right to seek the better deal providing the quality is there. But at the same time, obviously I feel we have a responsibility in making sure that we do get Ontario working. However, I will get the information and I will get back to the member.

**Mr Kwinter:** Another problem that we have with this particular order is that the vehicles that are being ordered are high-floor, lift-equipped buses. This is a type which the mobility-challenged community say is unacceptable. They find that it really prohibits the mobility-challenged passenger from boarding the bus. Your government has a policy of funding only low-level buses, and in order for this contract to be realized, they're going to have to ask you for an exemption from that policy.

So we have a situation now where it's sole-source, there was not an opportunity for Orion Bus to even quote on the order, and they do not meet your own policy of having low-level buses available for the mobility-challenged community. The question is, are you going to allow this order to proceed or are you going to stop it?

**Hon Mr Palladini:** We do have a policy in place, and I believe we have a responsibility to the disabled to make sure that buses are readily available for them to board in a convenient manner.

Again, I want to say to the member that I have no idea of what has transpired, but we do have a policy in Ontario that buses that are purchased must be low-floor, and without the government's permission, they will not be able to buy any of these buses. I would like to assure the honourable member that I will certainly look into this matter to see how it can be best resolved.

## GAMBLING

**Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine):** My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. As you know, the cities of Toronto and Scarborough are considering placing on the municipal ballot this fall a referendum question to their residents, asking whether or not they are in favour of the operation of charitable gaming casinos and of video slot machines.

My question is very simple. You have announced today that you are putting forward a regulation to allow these referendum questions to be placed. If the answer is no, will your government immediately cancel all plans to proceed with charitable gaming casinos and video slot machines within the boundaries of those existing municipalities?

**Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing):** That subject falls under my colleague Mr Tsubouchi, and I would ask him to take the question.

**Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations):** I want to begin by saying that in response to the initiative for the charity gaming

clubs, there have been plenty of willing hosts across the province who have stepped forward, municipalities that realize this will benefit their charities and benefit their communities.

Certainly nowhere have we ever said that we would force any municipality into taking any gaming initiative; in fact, quite the opposite. We have been listening to various municipalities bringing forward their concerns in their communities.

But I want to point out that in the RFP process for the charity gaming club, it indicates that at this stage right now, after the short list has been compiled, the proponents on the short list are at this point in time to meet with municipalities to discuss the proper locations within communities to do these. Certainly many of the concerns that people have such as in residential areas — that's silly to even consider that. There are many things we need to discuss with municipalities.

**Ms Lankin:** Let me try this simple question one more time. In the cities of Toronto and Scarborough, the two cities that are right now contemplating putting these questions on charitable gaming casinos and video slot machines on the municipal ballot — right now they're considering that. After the election, those cities won't exist any more; there will be a megacity council.

Are you, as the provincial government, going to listen to the results of those referenda? If the results are no, will you cancel the casinos in my community of Beaches, in downtown Lakeshore, in Scarborough Bluffs? Will you cancel them or not, or are you going to slough it off on the new megacity?

The member for Scarborough East last night, at a city hall meeting in Toronto, said very clearly — it's on CBC, CTV, CITY-TV; every one of them has it on tape — you will not force it on the cities of Toronto and Scarborough if they are unwilling hosts; you won't slough it off to the megacity. I want that here today, in Hansard, clarified. Will you listen to the results or not?

**Hon Mr Tsubouchi:** I thought I had answered that in the first response. I'll gladly repeat what I said. This could end up being a very moot question anyway, because we do have plenty of willing hosts, but I said that nowhere have we ever said that we would be forcing municipalities to do anything, and that is certainly a question she has asked.

Secondly, I said it's quite the opposite. We have been listening to municipalities, as you have been requesting us to do. I think it's important for us to consult with councils and to listen to what they have to say. It's very important for us.

But I would like to bring a little context to this, first of all. What we are actually doing with the charity gaming clubs is replacing the old system of the three-day rovers which, it's acknowledged, did not work. In fact, the members of the OPP have indicated they've already issued 34 charges under the Gaming Control Act in the first six months of this year; also, they've had 15 Criminal Code charges.

Clearly the old system was not working. Clearly we need to be more accountable to charities and to the taxpayers of Ontario, and this is what we're saying.

1520

### SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

**Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South):** My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. In 1995 our government promised to help people get off welfare. Our goal has been to provide welfare recipients with the right tools and opportunities to help them break free from the cycle of welfare dependency. Since June 1995, the region of Peel has reduced its welfare costs and its welfare rolls accordingly and, in fact, was one of the first sites for the workfare program.

Can the minister tell this House what the ministry has done to help those on welfare put an end to this cycle and how Peel region's current welfare figures compare to the rest of Ontario?

*Interjections.*

**Mrs Marland:** Mr Speaker, do I have to shout over that noise from across the floor? I asked the question but you couldn't even hear it.

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** I did. Minister.

**Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services):** We've been very encouraged with the activities that Peel has taken. They were one of the first sites that got up and running on Ontario Works, our work-for-welfare program. What we've seen happen in that community in the last two years is they've had a 21% drop in the number of people who are trapped on welfare. That's over 6,000 cases, an unprecedented drop.

We know that the majority of people who are leaving the welfare system across the province — 218,000 fewer people — are going out into paid jobs. We did a survey last year, discovered that 62% are indeed leaving welfare for employment-related reasons; another 11% had additional income, which is why they left. We know that people are moving off welfare rolls because of strong economic growth.

We've heard today in the House about the net new jobs, almost a quarter of a million net new jobs in the last two years in this province, and also because of our welfare reforms, including work for welfare.

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker:** I'm not sure what you said, member for Lake Nipigon. I would just caution the member for Lake Nipigon. I'm not certain about what that was, but you might be on the edge there. I think you should just be careful.

**Mrs Marland:** It may well be that the opposition is not interested in the fact that we have a fifth fewer number of people off welfare now in the region of Peel. I find it really discouraging that they do not care enough about these people to allow a question to stand without interjections. I'm surprised, frankly, that you, as Speaker, allow that kind of noise, where I can't even hear myself speak.

**The Speaker:** Member for Mississauga South, you've got a minute to put your question. If you'd put your question, I'd appreciate it. Yes, there's heckling. There's heckling from both sides. Member for Mississauga South, there has been heckling all day from this side of the House. If you're not hearing it, I can't help that. I've heard it. I've heard it from this side and this side. I ask you to put your question.

**Mrs Marland:** And do I have to yell?

**The Speaker:** I'm sure you can come to — order. Pull yourself together. Thank you. Member for Mississauga South.

**Mrs Marland:** I'll try to ask the question, Madam Minister, through the Speaker, but I think having to yell in this House is demeaning for all of us.

I would like to ask the minister how the taxpayers in Peel and my riding of Mississauga South —

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Order. Member for Mississauga South.

**Mrs Marland:** You'll be interested to know that I did ask the question, but obviously even you could not hear it over this noise.

**The Speaker:** When I stand, I can't hear it, because your mike is off. Minister.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** I think I heard the question. One of the very positive things about what is happening with the reduction in the welfare rolls is that it's a win-win situation not only for the people who are no longer trapped on welfare, but also for the taxpayers who very generously support this program.

What we've seen in Peel is a \$14-million saving in the last two years for Peel taxpayers, and I would like to congratulate Peel for the work they've done on our work-for-welfare program. This is one of the things that's contributing to the reduction. That \$14-million saving to those Peel taxpayers is one of the reasons they've been able to hold down property taxes. That's evidence of the kind of municipal management that we have great faith in in terms of the partnership we now have in social services. We look forward to this kind of record in many other municipalities. There are now 42 municipalities delivering Ontario Works and it is steadily expanding across the province.

### EDUCATION FINANCING

**Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood):** My question is to the Minister of Education and Training. Minister, I want to illustrate to you how your cutbacks in funding to education are hurting real families and real children.

First of all, there is a five-year-old child in my riding whose name is Julia, who suffers from a chromosome abnormality and requires special attention in the classroom. Her parents have been trying to get a teaching assistant in her grade 1 classroom to help with Julia's special needs so that she can stay in her local community school and not be forced to go to private school, which they can't afford. The school and the principal are trying

their best, but because of your cuts they told her that Julia has to leave the school and go to a private school.

Minister, do you think it's right that cuts should end up with a young child like Julia being forced to go to a private school and not being able to stay in her local school?

**Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training):** I am sure the member won't be surprised that I can't comment on an individual case, but if you'd send me the particulars of this case to my office, I'd be more than happy to look into it.

I would remind the member for Oakwood that funds for special education have not been reduced by this government. That's something we want to be very clear about. They have not been reduced by this government. In fact, one of the reasons we're moving to a new allocation model for funding education is to protect special education, to protect the full budget for it so that those students, particularly those students most in need, can receive the support they require.

We think that's an important part of the allocation model. That's one of the reasons why it's a special component, why it's set to the side and protected, so that we won't have these kinds of circumstances.

**Mr Colle:** One of the problems is that Julia suffers as a child, but I also have a woman in my riding, Antonella, who's a laid-off specialist teaching assistant. She has been laid off because of your cuts. Minister, would it make sense to rehire or have money in the system to have teaching assistants so that Antonella, who is the sole breadwinner in her family, can have a job and at the same time can possibly help Julia, the child, in the school which needs her services as a teaching assistant?

Don't you see that whether you blame the school boards or whoever, you're hurting children and people who want a basic job like a teaching assistant and who are being laid off? Julia suffers, Antonella suffers, both families are suffering. Won't you look into what is happening to kids and families?

**Hon Mr Snobelen:** Let me repeat to the member for Oakwood, I'd be more than happy to look at these particular cases. If you'd send them to my office, I'd be more than happy to investigate those. I think all of us have a concern to make sure the needs of people in Ontario are met.

But I remind the member opposite that we specifically have changed and are in the process now of changing how we fund education to protect those who need our services the most. We have not in any way, shape or form, cut special education, and yet there are these cases that you're aware of where the services are just not getting to the young people who need them.

I'd suggest the member opposite support us, support this government in its initiative to get a better funding system, get a funding system that meets the needs of all of our students, particularly those students who need special services, because they should be of greatest concern to all of us. That's why we're changing the funding system, and those are the circumstances our new funding system will provide for.

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** New question.

**Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre):** My question is to the Minister of Environment and Energy.

**The Speaker:** He's not here.

**Mr Christopherson:** He came over earlier and asked me if I had a question on the Plastimet fire, and I said yes, so he knew.

**Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Government House Leader):** Point of order, Mr Speaker: He had another engagement. I think he commented to the two critics that unfortunately he did have to leave. He was here for most of question period, but unfortunately he had to go.

**Mr Christopherson:** Speaker, it's not on the list. We weren't informed of that. He didn't tell me he was leaving; he just came over and said —

**The Speaker:** To the member for Hamilton Centre, the fact is that the Minister of Environment isn't here. Would you like to redirect your question?

**Mr Christopherson:** No.

1530

## MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

**Mr Len Wood (Cochrane North):** I have a question for the Solicitor General. As of January 1, you've dumped all the OPP costing on to the municipalities. For example, in Hearst a year ago they were expecting they might have to pay a cost of \$125 to \$225. Now through the media you've told them they're going to have to pay up to \$508 in Harty, Moonbeam, Fauquier, Smooth Rock Falls and all the other communities. My question to you is, how do you expect these communities to raise the money to pay for these services?

**Hon Robert W. Runciman (Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services):** This is a reassignment of responsibilities between the municipal government and the provincial levels of government. There's a tradeoff of programs, as we know, that have been discussed through the Who Does What process. Certainly all three parties over the past 15 or 20 years have talked about bringing fairness and equity into the process with respect to all residents of Ontario paying their fair share for policing. The reality is that somewhat over 200 municipalities currently pay in a direct sense, through their property taxes, for policing in their various communities and over 500 municipalities have not been paying.

Even your colleague, two seats to the left of the member asking the question, indicated during his time in government in this capacity that his government — his position at that point was supportive of what we've done. By and large, the response on a province-wide basis from municipal governments, both large and small, has been supportive.

**Mr Len Wood:** This government has said that the downloading and the dumping is going to be a wash, that property taxes will not go up, yet when you talk about transferring the cost of OPP servicing, you're doing it on a district-wide basis, which means that some areas are going

to pay \$200 a year and others are going to pay up to \$750 a year for OPP policing. You did it on a district-wide basis.

At the same time, you're saying the dumping and the downloading is going to be neutral. Can you tell these municipalities how they're going to pay for these services without increasing property taxes if this government is saying everything is going to be neutral?

**Hon Mr Runciman:** I can't speak to individual municipalities. At least two funds have been established to assist in certain situations, and they will be assessed when the appropriate time rolls around. I want to say we've had situations over the past number of years where we've had municipalities side by side receiving OPP policing, some municipalities on a contract basis, others on a non-contract basis and not paying in a direct sense. We've had municipalities pulling out and refusing to pay because their neighbours have not had to pay because of the system that has been in place for many years, that have recognized it's totally unfair where you have a neighbour paying through their property tax and the other not paying. We've moved to redress that situation, we've moved to correct it, a position that was supported by your Solicitor General and supported by members of the Liberal government. We are the first government actively moving to correct that wrong.

#### FIREARMS CONTROL

**Mr Trevor Pettit (Hamilton Mountain):** My question is also for the Solicitor General, and it concerns the federal gun control bill, C-68. Some people have suggested that the registration of all firearms will somehow reduce violent crime. I understand the province is currently challenging the registration provisions of Bill C-68 in the Alberta Court of Appeal. Minister, what evidence do you have that registering firearms will not stop criminals and will in fact tie up police resources, persecuting law-abiding gun owners?

**Hon Robert W. Runciman (Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services):** I want to thank the member for his question. Indeed, information we've collected shows that imposing a costly universal firearms registration won't get guns off the streets and out of the hands of criminals. In fact, it will divert police resources from where they're needed the most, on front-line law enforcement.

Firearms registration is not new to Canada. The current handgun registration has been in place since 1978. Handguns have been required to be registered in one form or another since the 1930s. But the numbers show it has not — capital N, capital O, capital T, NOT — worked. For example, of the 437 handguns seized in 1995, only 12.5% were registered. In 1994 the figure was only 10.6% of over 700 handguns.

The federal government's estimated cost to the system of \$85 million — we think they've exceeded that amount already — is very much disputed. Even if it were accurate,

that's more than enough money to pay for policing in the entire counties of Simcoe and Middlesex combined.

#### PETITIONS

##### MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

**Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury):** This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the provincial government has discontinued the northern support grant which has traditionally compensated the north for assessment deficiency and increased service costs; and

"Whereas the north is confronted with unique costs, severe weather conditions, higher prices, difficult terrain, higher levels of unemployment and a lower per capita income; and

"Whereas the provincial government has indicated its intention to eliminate all municipal unconditional grants, including the conditional road subsidy; and

"Whereas there has been no indication that the Ontario mining tax, which was implemented to fund northern support grants, will be eliminated or reduced;

"Now therefore be it resolved that we petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to fully support and endorse the position taken by the Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities (FONOM) in its paper entitled 'Fairness and Equity for Our North'; and

"That the province be requested to enact a new act to establish and provide on a permanent basis 'northern Ontario investments' for northern municipalities to provide funds to maintain the basic infrastructure in terms of roads, water and sewer facilities and provide funds to stimulate the social and economic development of the north; and further

"We the undersigned believe that the amount set aside for the 'northern development investments' be equivalent to the amount set aside for the northern support grant in 1989, indexed on an annual basis."

I affix my signature to this petition.

#### COURT DECISION

**Mr Bert Johnson (Perth):** I have a petition.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas communities strongly disagree with allowing women to go topless in public;

"We the undersigned petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To enact legislation to require women to wear tops in public places for the protection of our children and for public safety in general."

I will sign it so that it will be accepted at the table.

## HEALTH CARE WORKERS

**Mr John C. Cleary (Cornwall):** The people of my riding have organized the following petition to express concerns about the delivery of health care in Ontario. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas we the health care consumers and health care providers of Ontario request that the Ministry of Health take steps to ensure that direct patient care be provided by adequate numbers of regulated health care workers whose skills and knowledge match the role they undertake;

"We the undersigned petition the Legislature of Ontario."

## COURT DECISION

**Mr Bob Wood (London South):** I have a petition signed by 87 people.

"Whereas at this time in the province of Ontario it is not illegal for a woman to appear topless in public, and due to the fact that this lack of restriction offends a large percentage of Ontarians;

"We the undersigned petition the government of Ontario to introduce legislation that would make it illegal for a woman to appear topless in any public place except in clearly marked designated beach areas."

1540

## IPPERWASH PROVINCIAL PARK

**Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming):** To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas many questions concerning the events preceding, during and after the fatal shooting of Anthony Dudley George on September 6, 1995, at Ipperwash Provincial Park, where over 200 armed officers were sent to control 25 unarmed men and women, have not been answered; and

"Whereas the officers involved in the beating of Bernard George were not held responsible for their actions; and

"Whereas the Ontario Provincial Police refused to co-operate with the Special Investigations Unit in recording the details of that night; and

"Whereas the influence and communications of Lambton MPP Marcel Beaubien with the government have been verified through transcripts presented in the Legislature; and

"Whereas the trust of the portfolio of native affairs held by Attorney General Charles Harnick is compromised by his continued refusal for a full public inquiry into the events at Ipperwash; and

"Whereas the promised return of Camp Ipperwash to the Stony Point Nation by the federal Ministry of Defence and the serious negotiations of land claims by both the provincial and federal governments could have avoided a conflict;

"We, the undersigned, request that a full public inquiry be held into the events surrounding the fatal shooting of Dudley George on September 6, 1995, to eliminate all misconceptions held by and about the government, the OPP and the Stony Point people."

## RENT REGULATION

**Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York):** I've got a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and it reads:

"Whereas the government of Ontario is proposing to take away the protections of the Rent Control Act; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario is proposing to allow a landlord to charge a tenant who moves into an apartment whatever the landlord can get away with; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario is proposing to raise the limit of how high rents can increase for all tenants; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario is proposing to make it easier to demolish or convert existing affordable rental housing; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario is proposing to take away the rent freeze which has been successful in forcing some landlords to repair their buildings;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to keep the existing rent laws which provide true protection for tenants in place."

I affix my signature to this.

## CHARITABLE GAMING

**Mrs Brenda Elliott (Guelph):** Today I present a petition pertaining to the issue of charity gaming casinos. This is signed by approximately 38 residents in my riding of Guelph and I submit it today on their behalf.

## GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** I have a petition signed by a number of individuals concerned about the education advertising that's taking place.

"Whereas the Minister of Education intends on taking more than \$1 billion out of Ontario's education system at a time when there is an increasing consensus on the importance of supporting our schools and classrooms; and

"Whereas per pupil funding in the province of Ontario now ranks below other jurisdictions, such as Georgia, Kentucky, Missouri and Nebraska; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government has now embarked on an advertising campaign which will cost the taxpayers of Ontario over \$1 million; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris commercial doesn't constitute an important public announcement and instead is clearly an abuse of public funds, because they are self-serving political messages which are designed to influence public opinion; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government could cancel the advertising campaign and use the \$1 million which be-

longs to the taxpayers of Ontario for the purchase of 40,000 textbooks;

"We, the undersigned, call on the Mike Harris government to cancel their blatantly partisan, self-serving political advertising campaign and redirect the taxpayers' \$1 million to classroom funding."

I agree with this petition. I affix my signature to it in my agreement.

#### RENT REGULATION

**Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York):** I have a citizens' petition and it reads as follows:

"We, the undersigned concerned citizens of Ontario, Canada, oppose the proposed amendments to the Human Rights Code contained in section 200 of Bill 96, the Tenant Protection Act.

"Section 200, which allows landlords to use income information to disqualify prospective tenants, will have a devastating impact on single mothers, the disabled, refugees, seniors and people receiving social assistance, among others. It will severely reduce the housing options for low-income individuals and families, increasing the number of households that are forced into homelessness or into overpriced accommodation.

"If section 200 of Bill 96 is not amended, the government of Ontario will be authorizing discrimination against people with low incomes.

"Thus we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that the words 'income information' be deleted from sections 36 and 200 of Bill 96."

I agree with this petition and sign it.

#### SOCIAL WORK

**Mrs Brenda Elliott (Guelph):** I today present a petition to the House on behalf of approximately 45 constituents in my riding of Guelph. This pertains to the issue of the regulation of delivery of social work in the province of Ontario and I submit it today on their behalf.

#### PUBLIC SERVICE AND LABOUR RELATIONS REFORM

**Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur):** Outrage is growing across the province about this government's Bill 136, which will effectively end collective bargaining for the public service. I have a petition I wanted to read:

"Whereas the Harris government's Bill 136 will effectively suspend all labour relations rights for municipal, health and school board employees affected by provincially forced amalgamations; and

"Whereas the Harris government's Bill 136 will hurt average workers in every community across Ontario including nurses, teachers, firemen and police officers; and

"Whereas the Harris government's bill will decrease the quality of health care as well as the quality of education delivered in Ontario; and

"Whereas the Harris government's Bill 136 was designed to provide the government with sweeping powers to override long-standing labour negotiation rights for workers including the right to negotiate, the right to strike, the right to seek binding arbitration and the right to choose a bargaining unit;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, support our MPP Michael Gravelle in his opposition to this legislation and join him in calling upon the Harris government to repeal Bill 136 which creates a climate of confrontation."

I'm pleased to add my name to this petition.

#### RENT REGULATION

**Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York):** My petition reads as follows:

"We, the undersigned concerned citizens of Ontario, Canada, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that we do not agree with the proposed Tenant Protection Act, Bill 96, section 200, which would make it legal for landlords to refuse to rent to low-income people. Many landlords would be happy to be able to legally refuse to rent to people on welfare, FBA, disability, single mothers, seniors with low pensions and other low-income people, such as large numbers of minorities.

"This change to the Ontario Human Rights Code is a violation of the Charter of Rights, which Canada signed. We therefore request that the words 'income information' be removed from Bill 96, section 200."

I sign this petition in agreement.

#### ROCK MUSIC GROUP

**Mr John R. Baird (Nepean):** I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the rock band Marilyn Manson was permitted to play a concert at the Ottawa Congress Centre on Friday, August 1, 1997; and

"Whereas Marilyn Manson's wilful promotion of hatred, violence, immorality and obscenity has been linked to teen suicides and adolescent crimes across North America; and

"Whereas by allowing Marilyn Manson to perform, the Ottawa Congress Centre, a crown agency with a public mandate, helps to legitimize the band and its unethical messages; and

"Whereas the Ontario Court (General Division) has ruled that Marilyn Manson's music does not meet the definitions of obscenity or hate literature in the Criminal Code;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to call on the Liberal government of Canada to amend the Criminal Code in order to ensure that Marilyn Manson and other people directing messages of hate and derision towards vulnerable children and youths are not permitted to perform in Canada, and to ensure that messages which offend the moral and ethical sensibilities of Ontarians are not given a voice at venues financed by

the taxpayers of Ontario, including the Ottawa Congress Centre."

As required, I have affixed my own signature thereto. It's signed by Victor King and Larry and Denise Slatter.

### MUNICIPAL ELECTION

**Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury):** This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Bill 156 was introduced as a private member's bill and is entitled the Regional Municipality of Sudbury Statute Law Amendment Act, 1997; and

"Whereas this bill provides for the direct election of the chair of the regional municipality of Sudbury by a vote of the electors of the area municipalities; and

"Whereas the election of the regional chair will be held concurrently with the regular election in the area municipalities; and

"Whereas we, the electorate of the regional municipality of Sudbury, want to be part of the electoral process in electing a regional chair; and

"Whereas we, the electorate, believe that as residents of the area municipalities composing the regional municipality of Sudbury we have the right to decide who is elected to the office of regional chair; and

"Whereas we, the electorate, support Bill 156, which lets the people decide;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support MPP Rick Bartolucci's private member's bill enacting the Regional Municipality of Sudbury Statute Law Amendment Act, which will provide the taxpayers of the regional municipality of Sudbury with a voice in electing our regional chair, and urge the assembly to deal with this private member's bill immediately."

I affix my signature to this petition.

1550

### CHILD CARE

**Mrs Brenda Elliott (Guelph):** I have a petition to present to the House from a number of constituents, 21 I believe, across the province. It concerns issues of child care policies and funding. It requests looking at the issue of child care tax credits and also requests us to discuss with the federal government ways to review the tax system to find ways to assist two-parent families where one parent chooses to remain at home.

I submit it today on their behalf.

### TVONTARIO

**Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur):** The people of Ontario want to have some say in the future of TVOntario and we've got petitions coming in from all across the province. This petition reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas TVOntario/TFO is owned by the people of Ontario; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government has opposed public support for maintaining TVO as a publicly owned and funded educational broadcaster by putting TVO through a privatization review; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government has not confirmed that full public participation will be part of this privatization review;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to hold open and honest public consultation with the people of Ontario before making a decision on the future of TVO/TFO."

This is sent in by Dr G.W. Milne from Thunder Bay. I'm proud to sign my name to that petition.

### BEAR HUNTING

**Mrs Brenda Elliott (Guelph):** have one final petition to present to the House today. This is from 15 constituents in my riding and these constituents send this petition in support of the ban against spring bear hunting. I present it today on their behalf.

### MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** I have a petition which reads as follows:

"Whereas the Mike Harris government has announced its intentions of dumping the financing for ambulances, social housing and public health care services on to the backs of municipalities; and

"Whereas this irresponsible action will create a shortfall of more than \$42 million for local governments in St Catharines and the Niagara region; and

"Whereas local representatives in St Catharines and the Niagara region will be forced to either raise property taxes by as much as \$200 per household or cut services; and

"Whereas Mike Harris called municipal representatives whiners when they tried to explain to him that his proposal was unfair and would create gaps in important services such as the delivery of public health care services;

"Whereas the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing accused local representatives of being opportunistic simply because they attempted to point out that the Mike Harris proposal was unfair and primarily designed to fund his ill-advised tax scheme; and

"Whereas the Harris government refuses to listen to the representatives, who work most closely with their constituents;

"We, the undersigned, call on the Mike Harris government to scrap its downloading plan, which will cause either an increase in property taxes or an unacceptable cut to important local services."

I affix my signature to this petition as I'm in full agreement with its sentiments.

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### TIME ALLOCATION

**Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Government House Leader):** I move that, pursuant to standing order 46 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 152, An Act to improve Services, increase Efficiency and benefit Taxpayers by eliminating Duplication and reallocating Responsibilities between Provincial and Municipal Governments in various areas and to implement other aspects of the government's "Who Does What" agenda, when Bill 152 is next called as a government order, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill without further debate or amendment, and at such time the bill shall be referred to the standing committee on general government;

That the standing committee on general government shall be authorized to meet at its regularly scheduled meeting times on October 9, 1997, to consider the bill, which consideration may include public hearings;

That the standing committee on general government shall further be authorized to meet to consider the bill for four days during the next recess for the purpose of conducting public hearings;

That all proposed amendments shall be tabled with the clerk of the committee by 5 pm on the fifth calendar day following the final day of public hearings on the bill;

That the committee shall be authorized to meet for one day during the said recess for clause-by-clause consideration of the bill;

That the committee shall further be authorized to meet at its first regularly scheduled meeting times following the said recess for a second day of clause-by-clause consideration; and that the committee shall be authorized to meet beyond its normal hour of adjournment that day until the completion of clause-by-clause consideration;

At 5 pm on that second day of clause-by-clause consideration, those amendments which have not yet been moved shall be deemed to have been moved, and the Chair of the committee shall interrupt the proceedings and shall, without further debate or amendment, put every question necessary to dispose of all remaining sections of the bill and any amendments thereto. Any divisions required shall be deferred until all remaining questions have been put and taken in succession with one 20-minute waiting period allowed pursuant to standing order 127(a);

That the committee shall report the bill to the House not later than the first sessional day that reports from committees may be received following the completion of clause-by-clause consideration, or not later than December 1, 1997, whichever is earliest. In the event that the committee fails to report the bill on the date provided, the bill shall be deemed to have been passed by the committee and shall be deemed to be reported to and received by the House;

That upon receiving the report of the standing committee on general government, the Speaker shall put the question for adoption of the report forthwith, and at such time the bill shall be ordered for third reading;

That one sessional day shall be allotted to the third reading stage of the bill. At 5:45 pm or 9:15 pm as the case may be on such day, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and shall put every question necessary to dispose of this stage of the bill without further debate or amendment;

That the vote on third reading of the bill may, at the request of any chief whip of a recognized party in the House, be deferred until the next sessional day during the routine proceeding, "Deferred Votes";

That in the case of any division relating to any proceeding on the bill, the division bell shall be limited to 5 minutes.

I wanted to first of all say that I will be dividing my time with the member for York-Mackenzie and the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale.

I've just moved a time allocation motion on Bill 152, the Services Improvement Act. It's not something that the government prefers to do. The government prefers to have an open and thorough debate on a matter but to be able to bring it to conclusion, that all members of the House are satisfied, and then send it to public hearings to allow the general public an opportunity to state its case. We are sending this bill to public hearings through the next recess and we do expect input into the bill. I certainly look forward to that; the government looks forward to that. But it's a bit unfortunate that we to bring in time allocation to allow that to happen, to allow the general public the opportunity.

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** I thought your new rules meant we didn't have to do this.

**Hon David Johnson:** The member opposite, my good friend from St Catharines, is expressing his concern about this situation as well.

The problem is that this has become the filibuster capital of the world. We have case after case of filibustering, of endless debate, of no conclusion on various matters. My colleague from St Catharines will recall the debate we had, for example, on gasoline pricing just a couple of weeks ago. Here was a motion, a simple motion. Ultimately the third party, the NDP, said, "Okay, we've had enough debate on that. Let's have a vote on this thing," and brought such a motion to the House.

The member for Fort York will know that the member for Nickel Belt, I think it was, stood on his feet in this House and said, "We've had enough debate on this gasoline pricing." The people of Ontario, indeed the people of Canada, are suffering because before weekends back in the summer it was the practice that the gasoline prices would get jacked up and people would have to pay additional costs. So the member for Nickel Belt — and I'm sure the member for Fort York supported him — said: "We've had enough debate on this. Let's bring it to a vote." The government said, "Great."

**Mr John R. Baird (Nepean):** Action.

**Hon David Johnson:** Action. That's right. "Let's get some action now. Enough of this talk." The government members said: "Great, let's get on with it. We've had" —

**Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: As always, these are matters of serious concern and there's no quorum in the House. I urge you to do the call.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin):** Would you please verify if there is quorum.

**Clerk Assistant (Ms Deborah Deller):** A quorum is not present, Speaker.

*The Deputy Speaker ordered the bells rung.*

**Clerk Assistant:** A quorum is now present, Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Minister?

1600

**Hon David Johnson:** At any rate, the upshot of the motion, to ask the ministers of all the provinces across Ontario to approach the federal government in a united fashion, was put to this House. The NDP said, "Let's vote on it," the government said, "Let's vote on it, let's take action," but unfortunately the Liberals, just two weeks ago, would not allow that vote to take place. I can understand their position. When your federal cousins are in Ottawa, it's a little embarrassing to have to deal with an issue like that.

But I think it's unfortunate for the people of Ontario that the minister, when he went to meet with his colleagues from across Canada, didn't have the force of this whole House, not only of the government support and the NDP support but the Liberal support as well, in terms of dealing with that issue. I will say, though, that he did make progress. The member is here. Notwithstanding that lack of support from particularly the Liberal Party, he did raise the issue and has made progress.

I don't wish to leave the impression that the filibustering and the requirement to bring in time allocations is solely resting on the official opposition. The member for Fort York will recall other debates, the debate we had earlier this week on the select committee to review Hydro. Aren't all the members in this House supportive of setting up this review? We have a report indicating, particularly relating to the nuclear aspects of Ontario Hydro, that there is reason for concern. There needs to be an investigation, there needs to be a review, a financial review, a review of the program. So the Minister of Environment has set in place a select committee, a select committee that must be approved by this House, again something that I would think would be supported by all members of this House, but I have to say that after a full day of debate the motion was not voted on. In this particular case, I have to say that the NDP has stalled in terms of supporting that motion. Again the filibuster goes on.

That's the requirement we face on a fairly constant basis. To bring things to a logical conclusion in this House, some definitive action has to be taken. I believe it's unfortunate, but it's a sad commentary on how things are working at the present time.

The history of this service improvement issue is a long one, and it's one that really deserves to be tackled and

really deserves to be finalized. My colleague the House leader, having served in this House for how many years now?

**Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma):** It will be 22 on Thursday.

**Hon David Johnson:** It's 22 years this Thursday. A round of applause.

*Applause.*

**Hon David Johnson:** I hadn't realized that the anniversary date was coming up. That's fabulous.

With all his experience, he will probably have sat through several hundred debates, I would think — more than that maybe.

**Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations):** Thousands.

**Hon David Johnson:** — thousands of debates in terms of setting out the responsibilities of the service delivery for municipalities for the province of Ontario.

Even the federal government is involved in that to some degree. If you think of welfare, for example, over the years there has been federal money into welfare, federal requirements around the welfare system, provincial funding, provincial requirements, municipal funding, municipal requirements. When people aren't happy with the welfare system, who do they point the finger at? If they point the finger at the municipalities, the municipalities say, "No, it's a provincial problem." If they point it at the province, they say, "No, it's the feds who are causing the problem." On and on it has gone, all through the ages.

So many issues: roads, partly shared by municipalities and partly shared by the province; the library system, partly funded by the province and partly funded by municipalities, and in that case partly funded by local municipalities and partly funded by regional municipalities. In transit it's the same sort of thing: some funding from the province, some funding from regional governments, and some funding, of course, from the users of the system.

Funding service delivery has been an entanglement. I know the government represented by the member for Scarborough-Agincourt tried valiantly to tackle this issue during their five years in office. I know the government preceding the present one tried really hard for a number of years to bring this forward and indeed did bring forward a formula. They called it disentanglement. I believe that was in 1992. Then what happened? Somewhere in 1993, as I can recall, there was a vote at an Association of Municipalities of Ontario conference, and it was rejected.

But the government of that day recognized the need to try to address this issue, to try to come to grips with it. Why? Because if you have all these levels of government involved, is there accountability for the services? The answer is that there isn't the accountability that there should be. Do you have a fairness in terms of the service delivery and the uniformity of the service delivery? The answer is no, there isn't necessarily the fairness. Is there the efficiency in the service delivery? Are the taxpayers getting the best value for the dollar? Again the answer is clearly no, they are not. That's why the previous government tried to address this issue, brought forward their

proposals. Unfortunately, it didn't go. It ended up a failure. That's why governments down through the ages have tried to deal with this issue, have debated this issue.

**Mr Marchese:** Finally Mike came along.

**Hon David Johnson:** I'm happy to say, as the member for Fort York says, finally a government has come forward which is taking this issue seriously.

**Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon):** Courageously.

**Hon David Johnson:** The member for Lake Nipigon says "courageous." I don't disagree with him. It is somewhat courageous, but only to the extent that we certainly have involved the leaders in the municipal field. You can't make these kinds of decisions in a vacuum, so back early in the spring, the provincial representatives sat down with leaders from the municipal field. Up to that point the leaders of the municipal field had said they were not happy with the formula the province was bringing forward, so we sat down with them and said, "Let us come up with the new formula." They did come up with a new formula and brought it forward to us. The government said, "Let us have a look at it." We had a look at it. We said, "Fine," and there it is.

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley):** Order, please. Member for Fort York, come to order.

1610

**Hon David Johnson:** That is the nucleus of the bill that's before us, Bill 152, which unfortunately we have to time allocate today to allow it to proceed, to allow these changes to be implemented. Through this bill there will be a clearer division of the services and a clearer division of the financing and the funding, and as a result, greater accountability, greater efficiencies, greater fairness to the people of Ontario, at less cost to the taxpayers.

Before I stood up, I listened to one of the members opposite indicate, in a petition he had, that there would be a \$200-per-household increase in a certain area of Ontario. The goal of this government is to reduce taxes. That is the goal not only at the provincial level. Surely this government must have some credibility in terms of reducing taxes now, since there have been three reductions to the personal income tax. We are on track to meet the commitment that we made to the people of Ontario that the provincial income taxes will be reduced by 30% by the end of this term.

*Applause.*

**Hon David Johnson:** Absolutely. The member for Fort York is delighted to hear it. That's a commitment we made on provincial personal income tax. I will say that we take the same attitude towards the property tax, that the property tax is too high, that it should be reduced.

The whole purpose of this bill is to ensure that municipalities have the tools to make sure there is the proper division, the proper accountability of service delivery at the local level so that municipalities can keep the taxes down.

The mayor of North York, who is one of the candidates to become the mayor of the expanded city of Toronto, said, "No tax increase," just this week.

**Mr Len Wood (Cochrane North):** You take a chainsaw and cut their legs off.

**The Acting Speaker:** Member for Cochrane North, come to order.

**Hon David Johnson:** I can tell you, Madam Speaker, I've served with the mayor of North York for many years. For a couple of decades I served with the mayor of North York at the municipal level, and he's a man of his word. If he says there'll be no tax increase, then I can say that if he is elected as the mayor of the new city, he will stand by his word. He's done it in the past. He's had a track record in North York.

The former Liberal member for Ottawa West, who I understand is also a candidate in these elections, says that taxes should not go up. He's committed to keeping the taxes not higher.

So here we are, having these municipal people coming forward saying that there should not be a tax increase, and I agree with them there should not be a tax increase.

I understand that until this is approved, until we've gone through the committee hearing process, seen the approval of this bill, municipalities have had time to work with it, bring it out, then yes, there will be some apprehension. But rest assured that the goal of this government is that taxes should go down, not up.

One of the ways of doing that, of course, is that a huge proportion of the cost of education will be coming off the property tax. Half of the cost of education will be coming off the property tax. Some people, the members opposite, may say, "Well, you're increasing the cost of social housing to the municipalities," or, "You're increasing the cost of public health." Here in Metropolitan Toronto the municipalities already pick up a big chunk of public health, for example; I think it's 60%. But the main point is that the cost of education is enormous. We're talking about taking about \$2.5 billion off the property tax. The cost of public health in Ontario is very low by comparison. I believe it's in the vicinity of a couple of hundred million dollars, by comparison to \$2.5 billion which is being taken off, an immense sum of money that's been taken off.

Yes, some things are being added on to the property tax. Some things will now be the fuller responsibility of the municipalities. They will have that responsibility, that accountability. They will be able to make the programs more efficient and less costly, but at the same time about \$2.5 billion will be removed from their tax bill and that will offset the cost of anything that's being added. This exercise will be revenue-neutral other than the unconditional grant, because that's what all the caterwauling is from the other side.

**Mr Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands):** That's nonsense. He can't spout nonsense in here. I've got a file from the mayors —

**The Acting Speaker:** Member for Kingston and The Islands.

**Hon David Johnson:** The unconditional grant, yes, will be eliminated. That's one of the grants. That has been signalled for a long time. The president of AMO has

recognized that those signals were there, that the unconditional grant would be removed. Indeed, half of it has already been removed and already been accommodated without tax increases in the province. The other half is to come. Save and except for that —

**Mr Pouliot:** How much taxes —

**The Acting Speaker:** Member for Lake Nipigon, come to order.

**Hon David Johnson:** Save and except for that, the exercise is revenue-neutral. Municipalities, with their greater ability for accountability and efficiency, should be able to reduce taxes. I think it can happen. It's certainly happened in the province of Ontario. This government has reduced the internal administration, nothing to do with the municipalities at all. We have looked at the cost of running government in the province the internal administration costs of the province that have been built up through years, through the NDP government, through the Liberal government, where the costs ballooned in the internal administration of this government. We've looked at that and we've been able to reduce those costs substantially. I believe municipalities can do the same thing.

I know the members opposite, the critics opposite, say no, that the municipalities do not have the ability to do that. But I tell you, you are shortchanging the municipalities. If you give them that responsibility and if you give them that accountability on the services, the roads, the public transit, the housing, the health, take half the education costs off, they will make it work. I've been there. I have the confidence in them. That's what this is all about.

I notice that in addition to the other members I mentioned, the member for Nepean will be sharing my time as well. Since I've already used 20 minutes, I think at this time I will leave my comments at that and turn the floor over to my colleagues.

**The Acting Speaker:** Further debate?

**Mr Frank Klees (York-Mackenzie):** I'm pleased to follow my colleague the member for Don Mills in addressing this motion. As we know, the motion before us really allows us to move Bill 152 on to the next stage of the legislative process, which is the stage of public hearings. I know all colleagues in this House, particularly members of the opposition, who consider public input critical to ensuring that legislation is in its best form possible will be supporting this particular motion to ensure that we move it from this place into the public arena where people from across the GTA, in fact from across the province, will have an opportunity to make their submissions to this bill.

I want to wade into this debate by quoting from an honourable member of this House who is not on the government side but rather occupies a very important seat in the Liberal Party. That is Mr Jim Bradley. I quote Hansard from the standing committee on estimates on November 1, 1989. That was a very good year. Mr Bradley — this is according to Hansard — said:

"[This] is what I am up against." This is like Tevye in *Fiddler on the Roof*, if you recall. "On the one hand, some are saying, 'Move now and never mind consulting any

more and going through any studies and determining databases,' and others are saying, 'If you don't consult us, then you don't care about us,' and so on and so forth." We try to steer a middle course there" — a typical, consistent Liberal format — "and get sufficient input without having it carry on forever, and that is the dilemma," according to the member for St Catharines.

It's critical that we move this bill into the forum of public hearings so that we can accomplish really two things. One is to ensure that we have input from people on the important elements of this legislation which will affect literally millions of people in this province. It will affect how governments do business in this province.

1620

**Mr Gerretsen:** If they don't agree, you will change it?

**The Acting Speaker:** The member for Kingston and The Islands, come to order.

**Mr Klees:** It will affect the efficiency with which municipalities can carry out the business of managing the responsibilities taxpayers have given them.

Secondly, it is also to ensure that we have an opportunity to set the record straight on what this legislation intends to do. Not everyone has the benefit or the time of watching these proceedings, and unfortunately, if they do, if they're listening to members of the opposition sometimes — and I have to be careful how I say this — I wouldn't say they misrepresent, because that would be out of order. What I would say is that on occasion certain aspects of the legislation, and in fact the intent of the Who Does What process, are characterized in such a way as to leave people with the wrong impression of what the government intends to do.

By getting out into the public, we have an opportunity as a government to set the record straight, to explain what the intent of this legislation is. I am sure the taxpayers of this province welcome that opportunity.

Why do we want to move forward with this legislation? It harkens back to June 1995 when this government was elected. It was elected on the premise that we would keep certain commitments to the people of Ontario. I know that members opposite like to read from the Common Sense Revolution on occasion. I'm going to beat them to it this time. I will read from the Common Sense Revolution in which we say very clearly to the people of the province:

"Canadians are probably the most overgoverned people in the world. We do not need every layer — federal, provincial, quasi-governmental bodies, regional, municipal and school board — that we have now. We must rationalize the regional and municipal levels to avoid the overlap and duplication that exists."

This is in the Common Sense Revolution. I don't know if you have heard members of the opposition, members of the third party, say that the proposals we are bringing forward have nothing to do with the commitments we made to the people of this province. In fact, we've been accused of moving in a direction that we did not discuss with the people of the province. Well, here it is. Very clearly, this is about a commitment we made to the people of the province that we would deal with the issue of dupli-

cation, the many levels of government, the inefficiencies that are there.

We go on to say in the Common Sense Revolution, which was widely distributed throughout the province and on which the people of this province based their decision to return many more members on the government side than on the opposition side: "The example being set by a Harris government, of a 24% reduction in the number of MPPs and a 20% cut in non-priority spending, will set the benchmark for municipal politicians and trustees."

Going into public hearings is going to enable us to put out a challenge to municipal politicians, to all of those service delivery agencies in this province that have as an example the provincial government where we have moved on those commitments as well. We have taken the initiative of reducing the size of government here at the provincial level. We've taken the initiative of reducing the number of politicians here at Queen's Park, beginning with the next election. We'd like to be able to begin that much sooner, but I think we are kind of limited in doing that.

What we are now facing is an opportunity. I think municipal politicians around this province should also welcome the opportunity to participate in a process that is a benchmark process. Never before in Ontario have municipal politicians been handed what they have been asking for for many years in terms of the tools to do the job, in terms of having additional authority that they never had before.

The mayor in Newmarket, in my constituency, His Worship John Cole, has had experience now as a municipal mayor and as a federal member of Parliament. In his own words he on numerous occasions has said, "The problem with the current state of affairs in Ontario is that municipalities are simply creatures of the province, that they need and deserve and should have more authority to do the things that they should have." I would expect that his worship as well would welcome the initiative we are bringing forward.

I'd like to point you to an article that perhaps you read with your coffee this morning. It was in the Toronto Star and it's entitled "Residents Support Sharing Wealth, Poll Finds." This has to do with an aspect of restructuring how services are going to be paid for in this province and particularly in the GTA. It's talking about the issue of sharing responsibility for social services. I think it's important that members of this Legislature are reminded of what the people are saying, not necessarily of what politicians who may have a vested interest in not wanting to agree that this is the right direction to go are saying. I'm not suggesting that anyone I know would do this, but there may be some municipal politicians heading to the polls this fall who may find it to their political advantage to rail against the provincial government, suggesting that if we proceed with this legislation, with the restructuring process, it may end up with a tax increase, it may end up having to pay for the benefits of Metro Toronto and so on.

I don't know anyone who's said this, but in case there may be some I thought we should bring to their attention

what the people think, the people who will be going to the polls to elect them. What are they saying about this? I'd like to read this to you:

"People across the greater Toronto area show a 'robust social conscience' and are willing to share their wealth with the less fortunate across the region....

"Some politicians in the 905 area — including mayors Peter Robertson of Brampton, Hazel McCallion of Mississauga and Carol Seglins of Caledon — have raised fears their tax dollars will be subsidizing 'gold-plated' service levels in Metro."

Mind you, they were quoted here by a newspaper, and all of us have been in a situation where we've been misquoted, so I wouldn't know if these three politicians actually said that. But their conclusion —

**Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt):** But I've said it anyway.

**Mr Klees:** The member for Scarborough-Agincourt said he has said it. If he has said it, then he is out of step. This article goes on to say, "These politicians run the risk of becoming out of step with their voters, who take a much more compassionate view of social justice across the GTA, the survey found."

I think we have to caution all of our colleagues — be that at the municipal level, be that in responsible positions as school board trustees and other areas within this province — to take on the responsibility that the people of the province want us to have as provincial politicians, want them to have as municipal politicians, to work cooperatively together to ensure that what we can bring to the people of this province is less government, more efficient delivery of service and far less burden on the taxpayer.

That is what Bill 152, which is now under consideration, will do for us. It will allow us to assume the responsibility of stewardship in a much more effective way than the province has been conducting business to this point.

I am pleased to have had the opportunity to share my thoughts on the importance of moving this bill forward into the next very important stage of consultation, because I have no doubt that there are many who would have some recommendations to us as legislators where we can improve the legislation. That can be dealt with in clause-by-clause in this next stage. We can make some improvement where necessary and then get on to third reading, and then get on to implementation and make this province a much better place to live.

1630

**Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke-Rexdale):** I'm particularly privileged to follow the member for York-Mackenzie in his very balanced and temperate remarks regarding the Services Improvement Act.

Before I start, I'd also like to pay tribute to the Honourable Margaret Scrivener, with whom I had the opportunity of working here at Queen's Park. When I went to her service today I found out some amazing things from her family, particularly from her son Paul. The honourable Margaret Scrivener, when she was a member of this House for 14 years, not only was she a feminist, but she was a feminist by example, a very accomplished politician

and an avid farmer — can you imagine that combination? — also a realtor and a journalist. Here was a person who served the people of Ontario from a large number of perspectives and she brought that experience to produce excellent results in the Davis years.

*Laughter.*

**Mr Hastings:** Laugh all you want. I would hope that her memory serves as a legacy in this House for members opposite.

Now to this bill. This is my second opportunity to deal with some of the issues raised by the members opposite whose classic characterization of this particular bill is that by doing anything you are in essence increasing taxes or reducing services, or both.

It was interesting to note that the member for Sudbury in his remarks about a week ago raised the note that there were alternatives and suggestions made to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, yet in the correspondence of the organizations he referenced there was not one iota of what those specific alternatives were. I found it rather disappointing that the member for Sudbury did not proceed to flesh out what some of the alternatives are, because when we take this bill to hearings, that's what we want to hear in terms of solid alternatives as to how you can implement some of this stuff, rather than the syndrome that members opposite seem to get themselves into too much, which is reduced services, increased taxes, or both, that there's no other way of handling an issue.

That raises the matter which I want to focus upon again from my previous remarks, and that is the prevalence, the almost addiction — it is an addiction — that members opposite have had for years. The member for Scarborough-Agincourt is very good at saying: "We're going to increase taxes and we shouldn't really deal with the issue of assessment. It should be left primarily as it is because it's quite satisfactory that people who are already paying high taxes can continue to do so." That is exactly what the member has said many times in his critiques of any of the changes made to the Assessment Act.

**Mr Phillips:** I have never said that, John.

Point of order, Madam Speaker: I have never said that. Speak the truth.

**Mr Hastings:** You notice that whenever we make a gross distortion or statement, immediately you get this uprising, but on the other hand, they are constantly and continuously making false and inaccurate assertions about stuff in the bills that we have presented, whether it's the fair assessment improvement act, the Services Improvement Act, the removal of the cost of education from the property tax.

**Mr Phillips:** Get your facts straight, John. I never said it. Prove it, John.

**The Acting Speaker:** Order, please.

**Mr Hastings:** It's interesting to hear the rant of the member for Scarborough-Agincourt, because we usually listen with respect, throw in the odd remark here and there. But even in that particular context, he wants to have the respect of the members opposite that we are listening.

But you can hear across the way the irrelevant chant that we're getting constantly —

**Mr Phillips:** I have never said that. Prove it.

**Mr Hastings:** I must have touched a nerve here —

**The Acting Speaker:** Take your seat, please, member for Etobicoke-Rexdale. I have a point of order. Member for St Catharines.

**Mr Bradley:** Madam Speaker, just clarification on this point of order with you. Is it essential in the House that members tell the truth?

**The Acting Speaker:** What is your point of order?

**Mr Bradley:** The point of order is that the member for Rexdale is misquoting the member for Scarborough-Agincourt. What is his option? What can he do about this misquoting of him and misrepresenting of his position?

**Mr Phillips:** Prove it, John. If you're going to slam somebody, prove it.

**The Acting Speaker:** Settle down, everybody.

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker:** Order, please.

**Mr Pouliot:** Settle it on the golf course.

**The Acting Speaker:** Member for Lake Nipigon, come to order.

**Mr Pouliot:** Let's go and settle it outside.

**The Acting Speaker:** I'm warning you, member for Lake Nipigon.

Member for St Catharines, I'm assuming that all of the members in this House are honourable members and I also assume that all of the members always tell the truth. I would suggest to all members that if anything was said that may be provocative or may insult somebody, I would ask that member to withdraw if that member believes he said something that —

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker:** Could I have order, please. Member for Kingston and The Islands, order. Now let's get on with the debate. Member for Etobicoke-Rexdale.

**Mr Hastings:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's interesting to note —

*Interjection.*

**The Acting Speaker:** Order. Member for Hamilton Centre, that's enough.

**Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre):** I didn't say it.

**The Acting Speaker:** Well, whoever did, come to order. Member for Etobicoke-Rexdale.

**Mr Hastings:** Thank you, Madam Chair, for your interventions, trying to restore some order to this place. Much as I throw in the odd heckle, the member for Scarborough-Agincourt usually when I throw a heckle in gets very upset about it. But when we reference any of the remarks he has made in the past, we're in for the traditional Liberal outrage about it. The immoderate remarks are incredible. Anyway, that's the way it is, I guess, in the so-called debate that we have in this House.

To get back to the bill, I think it's interesting to note that what we've had as criticisms about the Services Improvement Act are citing constantly tax increases from here and there, that municipalities and municipal politi-

cians in amalgamated entities aren't able to deal with the challenges that they're facing, that we constantly remain in the status quo.

The member for Don Mills has mentioned that the previous government really did make an attempt to disentangle some of the responsibilities so we could deal with, and eliminate as much as is humanly possible, duplication of services. Yet when they got to the decision point, they retreated, for a whole set of reasons. Now when this government has moved back on that same decision point of trying to reprioritize the whole area of service delivery, provincially and locally, we hear constantly the criticism, "You shouldn't do anything." We're going to end up with a world where nobody is going to be able to deal with their responsibilities in a forthright way.

It seems to me that the previous government's attempt at disentanglement was a courageous one. The point is, why did they not follow through? Then we would be in a more coordinated municipal delivery system today. This particular piece of legislation would not have been necessary had the previous government acted on the whole disentanglement exercise when it got to that decision point.

At least we had that as a contrast prior to the group that ran Ontario between 1985 and 1990. They talk about the whole point that this government does not listen, does not accept change, does not incorporate suggestions into different pieces of legislation. That's not true whatsoever if you look at the record: hundreds of hours on the new city bill, hundreds of hours on Bill 26.

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The point seems to be that when this government does accept suggestions — and some of them come from outside parties and not the parties in the House here — we have incorporated them into several pieces of legislation, yet we're immediately criticized.

The other day it was interesting to hear the theme across the way, and it's echoed again and again, particularly by the member for Sudbury, that you shouldn't do hardly anything until you get it right; don't go too fast. Yet today the member for Sault Ste Marie is asking this government to act promptly on franchising legislation. You would wish that for once members opposite could get the tune relatively balanced.

Act? We are acting. Acting fast? That doesn't happen too much in government when you look at the bureaucratic levels, when you look at the sclerotic incapacity of government as a whole to act fast. It's like using the oxymoron "military intelligence."

I think the whole Services Improvement Act is a real attempt to reorder and reprioritize the whole municipal, local government, service delivery theme; that is, we have removed education from the property tax by 50%, which people have been talking about for years and years and years.

The member for Don Mills cited the member for Algoma having been here for 22 years very shortly. Congratulations to him. Yet in all that time span when he was in opposition and he came into government, that same

theme was here: Remove the education costs from property tax.

We wanted to do it 100%. The municipalities came back and said, "We have some problems with that." We listened to them, so we have taken 50% off.

**Mr Gerretsen:** They didn't have problems with that; they had problems with the downloading.

**The Acting Speaker:** Member for Kingston and The Islands, come to order.

**Mr Hastings:** It would be interesting to hear whether the members opposite advocate that the actual status quo in existence today continue; that is, that 100% of property taxes for education purposes remain. We certainly haven't heard that from members opposite. I'm interested in hearing whether they advocate the status quo on that particular point.

Finally, I would like to conclude by pointing out that on this whole piece of legislation, once it gets to committee for some very interesting proposals which I'm sure we will hear from various deputants, what I'm most interested in hearing is how we're going to get greater coordination through the services improvement bill. That's one of the great opportunities that has not been realized yet and will be in the coming years when we see how historic this legislation will be, the Services Improvement Act, in terms of realigning provincial responsibilities and local government responsibilities.

This government believes that the local delivery system, the local councillors, whether they be in a township, an amalgamated township system, a county government or a new urban city, will know best how to get on with the job of being able to get the best value out of the tax dollar without necessarily opting for the tax addiction of a tax increase when you have a challenge, a problem, that that won't be their dinosaur-like response to a problem: "Oh, I've got to have a tax increase here." That's what I'll be listening for when we take this to committee.

This is a good bill, finally dealing with the real problems in local government, and how it affects them provincially in a fiscal way.

**The Acting Speaker:** Further debate?

**Mr Bradley:** I will be sharing my time with the member for Scarborough-Agincourt and the member for Kingston and The Islands.

I would like to begin by noting that once again the government is inflicting upon an elected Legislature a motion which will close off debate and limit the time for committee hearings to a very unreasonable amount of time and of course close off debate on third reading after only one day. It is becoming symptomatic of this government that even though it changed the rules with its overwhelming majority, imposed new procedural rules on the House which give the government the hammer to push through its legislation in record time, it is still bringing in what are called time allocation motions which have the effect of severely restricting debate on any particular bill. I find that most unfortunate.

I think the people of this province who watch the proceedings in this House or who have a specific interest in

Legislation are now recognizing that probably the most important legislative initiative of this government has been to change the procedural rules, as though you're playing a sports game and you change the rules to favour one side over the other. I guess a good example would be that if you had a very huge hockey team which could use its size to the greatest benefit, you would modify the rules to accommodate that group. That reminds me of the government, with its very large majority. In the middle of the game the government has decided to change those rules to allow it to slide through its legislation, often very controversial and often opposed by the majority of the people in this province, to move that legislation through rapidly. That's most unfortunate.

There are times when the government should be moving rapidly when it has to, and there are certain areas where we've seen consensus in this House from the representatives of the three political parties, which has ensured that legislation or other measures have moved somewhat quickly through the House. When it is highly contentious, when there is considerable opposition, when the ramifications of the legislation are very substantial, we should take our time and do it right, as opposed to simply doing it quickly so that people will forget about it, so that the opposition out in our society does not have time to grow and express itself in various manifestations.

I always enjoy hearing the government members using their code words. They've been given instructions from the Premier's office to use such terms as "status quo" and "afraid of change" and so on. If anyone is opposed to the government legislation, supposedly they're in favour of the status quo.

Conservatives, in my view, have always been people who wanted to preserve that which is serving the province well. That has been the tradition of the Conservative Party. That is certainly not the tradition of the Harris regime, which seems to want to wreck everything which has been placed in this province in years gone by, by governments of all political stripes, including previous Conservative governments, because this is a government which is really a Reform Party government, an extreme right-wing manifestation of the Conservative Party.

When I look at some of my friends on the government benches, whom I used to consider to be what you would call blue Conservatives, they today would be categorized as red Tories in the context of the way this government is moving forward on its legislative and regulatory agenda.

I was amused as well by the government House leader and his discussion of gas prices. Of course, the government is very vulnerable on this and feels embarrassed by this, because when we used to ask questions of the government, they would — I must say, the honest person on the other side; I didn't agree with his position, but the honest person was Bill Saunderson, the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism. He was expressing a very Conservative view, a free market view of the system. I don't happen to believe there is a free market out there in terms of gas prices, but that was the view he expressed to people in this House. When he was asked the

questions, he suggested the government would not be making any significant initiatives in that regard.

Now, the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations, who has been coached by Jan Dymond, a consultant at \$2,600 a day, on how to answer questions and have funny quips and blame the federal government, blame the opposition or blame previous governments, took a different stance. He wanted to ensure that there was a suggestion that somebody else would look after the problem, so he went out west to Saskatchewan and got a crumb or two out there as the group got together and said, "Well, we'll look at the problem."

I think all of us know, including my friend the member for Quinte, who I think is as expert on this as anyone, that the provincial government has jurisdiction if it wishes to act. But all it wishes to do is huff and puff and make a big noise. Mr Saunderson — I wish I could find his quotes right now — when he was asked to comment on this, when he was asked questions on the issue of gas prices, said the government had no intention of intervening at all and suggested that we would be the laughingstock if the government was to interfere in the pricing of gasoline. That's an opinion the government had. I think that was the position of the cabinet.

1650

What happened was in came the polls. I'm sure my friend the Minister of Transportation, who smiles on the other side now, as he so often does in this House, knows that once you see the polls, you had better start listening to what's happening. So we saw a 180-degree turn. I asked him a question about it, because he's the Minister of Transportation. It was too hot; he bounced it over to the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations, because the Minister of Transportation didn't have Jan Dymond to coach him at \$2,600 a day. He didn't need it anyway, I want to say. But he bounced the question over. I asked Bill Saunderson, the Minister of Economic Development; he bounced it over.

They had given it to the minister whose only answer is to point the finger somewhere else and say, "You didn't do something," or, "It's the opposition's fault." I guess he wanted to have this resolution to hit everybody over the head with when he heads off to the meeting. Never do you ever consult the opposition on anything else when you go to these multiminister meetings. The fact is that this government can take action. I'm surprised that the government House leader would raise such an embarrassing situation.

I know Bill Saunderson must be extremely surprised when he sees this happening, because of the statements he made on this. What can this government do in that regard? I can tell you the government is able to bring in a predatory pricing law in the province of Ontario. What is that, you ask? That is a law which would prohibit the major oil companies from selling at a higher price to independent operators than it does to its own operators.

Let's get something straight: It's not the retailers' fault. They have to meet all their costs. They have difficulty out there. They meet taxes and they meet wage costs and they meet electrical costs, utility costs. They're not the people

to blame. It's the oil companies. I was glad to see our Premier jump on the bandwagon when he hit the skids in the polls. I can tell our Premier, if he really wants to take action, it's within his jurisdiction to pass a predatory pricing law.

Remember what Bill Davis did in 1975? I think a lot of the people here forgot about that. He brought in an act on July 3, 1975, which had the effect of freezing the price of gasoline in the province for 90 days, and then another 45 days. He appointed a one-person royal commission to look into gas pricing in this province.

Bill Davis didn't say, "Oh, it's somebody else's jurisdiction." He said: "No, it's our jurisdiction. I'm not going to blame the feds. I'm not going to blame anybody else."

**Hon Mr Tsubouchi:** David Peterson said that.

**Mr Bradley:** The Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations interjects about other governments, because that's what Jan Dymond says. Jan Dymond is the consultant who costs \$2,600 a day to advise the minister — this is taxpayers' money — on how to answer questions in the House. She says: "Why don't you blame the feds? Why don't you blame the opposition? Why don't you blame somebody else?"

I'm saying to members of this House, we have the jurisdiction. Bill Davis said we had the jurisdiction. He brought in the price freeze. You didn't bring it in, and I'm saying you've got that chance today. When the gas price was at an unprecedented level, when it was raised to way over 60 cents a litre, we had the chance. What does he do? He points the finger somewhere else, huffing and puffing, but he doesn't want to do anything about it.

Bill Saunderson, the Minister of Economic Development, had given the real answer, which was that the government had no intention of interfering in the marketplace and the government believed the prices were quite reasonable, as Mr Saunderson said. That is the government position.

I'm surprised when I hear the member get up and bring this issue up. Now they say the NDP wanted a vote. I forgive the NDP. They were playing politics on that particular day, because they were in a by-election fight — not with the Conservatives; they were right out of the battle in Windsor — and they thought, "How can we maybe score a point against Liberals?" So they said, "Let's vote on this motion." I understand that. I appreciate the position of my friends in the NDP in that regard. But since then, the member for Sault Ste Marie has been up —

**Mr Len Wood:** Jim, the enemy is over there.

**Mr Bradley:** That's right. The member for Cochrane North better than anybody knows where the enemy is; the enemy is on the other side of the House.

The member for Sault Ste Marie has been up subsequently saying, "You know, you people can take action." I'll tell you something: I can't believe what the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations accepted at that meeting and cheered. It was Pabulum. I think he should look at what Bill Davis did and bring in a predatory pricing law. I think he could have a commissioner looking into these gas prices right here in Ontario. Forget about the

rest of them; just do it right here in Ontario. Then your members could be proud. They could say: "See? Our members took action."

**Mrs Brenda Elliott (Guelph):** How does this fit into the debate?

**Mr Bradley:** The member for Guelph wonders, how does this fit into the debate? The government House leader raised it. I don't know why, because it's nothing but an embarrassment for this government.

I want to touch on a couple other items while I'm sharing time with my colleagues. I'm surprised that a Conservative government wants to make everything bigger. My knowledge of small-c conservatives, genuine conservatives, and the history of conservatives in this province, is they believe that the smaller units are often the best units — not always, but often the best units. Now you want big utilities, huge municipalities, boards of education the size of countries in Europe and health councils which cover, again, territory larger than the size of many countries on the European continent.

I'm surprised by this, because Conservatives, to me — and they'll be saying this at the plowing match, I'm sure, to the Conservatives — believe there should be smaller units, manageable units and units that are close to the people. I know there are many people out there who are Conservative supporters who are disillusioned when they hear that you're moving away from that. They didn't agree with other parties. They liked the Conservatives because they thought the Conservatives stood for that which was close to the people, wanted to preserve that which was best for us. But this isn't a Conservative Party; this is a Reform, Republican, radical group of people over there — with some exceptions. I look around and I say there are some exceptions. I see some of my friends here who I think are exceptions. But a lot of them are real right-wingers.

Frank, that's a beautiful tie over there. My friend from Lincoln has a very interesting tie on that I wanted to comment on. I shouldn't comment on this. I wish we could swing the camera over there, but they don't allow this. If he gets up on a point of something, I'm sure his constituents will be pleased to see the colourful tie he has on. But I digress, and I shouldn't.

I've mentioned Dr Joseph Kushner of Brock University, the small-c conservative economist who is often attacked for being too conservative and too cautious on expenditures, I think unjustifiably, who is now doing a study on utilities. If I were to reveal the results of that study ahead of time, I would say they have found that the very large utilities aren't necessary the best utilities to have.

When I look at the downloading, I look at municipalities that thought they were going to get a tax decrease. I heard it was a 10% or 20% tax decrease. I'm going to be watching for that, to see if there's a tax decrease, because that's not what I'm hearing. If there is a tax decrease, there are a lot of kids out there who aren't going to be able to play sports because the user fees will be so high only

the children of the rich and privileged will be able to compete in sports around the province.

Lastly, I say — because I want to share some time in this debate with my two colleagues — my friend from York-Mackenzie quoted me in the House, and I thank him for that, because I plead guilty to being a person of moderation and of consensus and a person who believes that while you should take your time and do things right, there is a time to move, and that's always a point of debate in this House. I thank him for quoting. He did so fairly, by the way. There were other quotes about Mr Phillips's position which I thought were not accurate, but Mr Klees was kind enough to quote me and I want to tell him that I will always be proud to be a person of moderation, a person of consensus and a person of conciliation. I thank him for drawing that to the attention of members of this House.

1700

**Mr Klees:** On a point of order, Madam Speaker: I just want to take this opportunity to thank the member for St Catharines for thanking me.

**The Acting Speaker:** That is not a point of order.

**Mr Phillips:** I'm pleased to join the debate on the motion that will curtail debate on Bill 152, and to start by saying to the public that this is an extremely important bill. It will fundamentally change the way services are provided in Ontario and frankly I think it's a big mistake.

I will use an authority that I hope the government accepts as at least independent, if not a government source itself, and that's their own Who Does What panel. David Crombie — that may be a name that's familiar to the public — and 14 other people were handpicked by the Premier to study this issue of what things should be handled municipally and what things should be handled provincially, and the taxpayers paid money to have this study done. David Crombie, a well-respected individual, did this study and made recommendations.

Bill 152 runs totally contrary to what David Crombie recommended. This is around the issue of putting on to property tax social housing, social assistance and child care. Crombie recognized that the government might try and do this and this is what Crombie and the Who Does What panel — and remember, Mike Harris handpicked these people to study this very matter that's in Bill 152. The taxpayers paid the money to a group that Mike Harris picked to study it and here's what they said about putting social housing, social assistance and child care on to property tax: "The panel strongly opposes such a move. We are unanimous in the view that it is a mistake." So I say to the public, what we're dealing with here is something that is going to fundamentally shift service delivery in Ontario, and David Crombie and the Who Does What panel say it is a big mistake and they strongly oppose it.

The Minister of Municipal Affairs, who was in the House earlier and will be back shortly, I'm sure, also acknowledged it's a mistake. I listened very carefully to a radio interview he did where he was asked, "Do you think income redistribution programs should be the responsibility of the province or property tax?" Mr Leach said: "I'm

clearly of the view they should be a provincial responsibility. We should not have income redistribution programs on property tax." The interviewer quite rightly said, "But this plan to put social housing, social assistance and child care on to property tax runs contrary to your view." Mr Leach had said, "I think they should be a provincial responsibility." Mr Leach said, and I'm paraphrasing now but I think I've got it fairly accurate, "Well, sometimes you can't get there very quickly."

The point I'm making is this: For Ontario, we are making a big mistake. Dave Crombie says it's a mistake. The Minister of Municipal Affairs himself acknowledges it's a mistake. Surely if they should be a provincial responsibility, we don't turn and go the other way and put it on property taxes.

I will further quote the Association of Municipalities of Ontario. I feel badly for them because the government has said, "We're doing what they want us to do." Well, AMO said, "Don't put social housing on property taxes." In my opinion, the government did a number on AMO. They put out this document showing all these checkmarks, pretending that they were in agreement: AMO proposal and a checkmark beside "social housing." AMO, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, said, "Don't put social housing on property tax." In my opinion, the government did a number on AMO. They put out this document showing all these checkmarks, pretending that they were in agreement — AMO proposal and a checkmark beside "social housing." AMO said, "Don't put social housing on property tax."

**Mr Gerretsen:** Big lie.

**The Acting Speaker:** Order. I would ask the member for Kingston and The Islands to withdraw that remark, please.

**Mr Gerretsen:** If I have offended you, I withdraw it.

**Mr Phillips:** The public watching this should recognize we are dealing with a fundamental issue here. I despair of some of the future council meetings in Ontario when what we're doing with this bill is guaranteeing that in those tough economic times — and there will be tough economic times. Every province, every country goes through those periods of good times and tougher times. The last 12 months have been good times for Ontario, but there will be some tough times ahead, and what we are doing with this bill is dooming people on social assistance and in social housing who rely on that, to have to go to council meetings where councils' backs will be right to the wall — tough times, people can't afford to pay their property taxes, and people's very existence — they will be fighting for their share of a declining property tax base.

Surely that isn't what we want to do. Is that the kind of Ontario we really want to build, where in tough times people have to turn to the property tax for their food and their housing and their clothing? Really, it's a fundamental mistake. I say to all of us, we simply can't allow that to happen, and yet this is what this is all about.

I further say that this will occur at a time when the Chair of Management Board acknowledged today that they are dumping about \$660 million of extra costs on the

property tax. They get around that by saying, "But we told the municipalities about a year ago we were going to do this, so while we're going to do it, they knew about it."

The property taxpayers recognize now that they are going to have to pick up \$660 million of extra cost. Why is all of that important? Is this the Ontario of Mike Harris where we are going to put on to the property tax some of the most sensitive social services that we know will be strained to the limit in difficult economic times? I have asked this before. I challenge the government to produce one single study that supports this public policy move. One of the members earlier said, "What are the options?" You engaged and paid Crombie to study this. He has the recommendations for you.

But the second big mistake is putting a significant portion of health on to property tax — ambulances and public health. Everybody in the health field tells us we have to find a way to integrate the system, make it a seamless system. As a matter of fact, we saw just this week concerns about ambulance services being coordinated with hospitals and concerns about people falling between the cracks with ambulance services. But here we are, we're now moving a significant part of health on to property tax, and surely that is not the integrated health care system that we want. That's the second thing.

The third point I wanted to make was that the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale, for anybody who was watching this earlier, attributed something to me that I simply never said, never would say, don't believe, and I resent it. I don't mind defending my points of view, but I object strongly to a member saying that I said something when it is actually the opposite of what I believe.

He has indicated I have no interest in property tax changes. In fact, the government members often quote something I said five or six years ago about being in favour of property tax changes and we've got to get on to it. Certainly the area I represent needs property tax change. It's dramatically overtaxed, and there's an issue of fairness. So, as I said, I don't mind debating my ideas, but I resent when I'm completely misrepresented.

1710

I would say just on that matter that the government has a property tax bill that we are anxious to be dealing with. The municipalities have been talking to us, saying: "This property tax change is in a shambles. We have got to get on with planning." The government now has a bill before the Legislature that they are refusing to bring forward, for whatever reason. I gather from the Minister of Finance late last week that there are a lot of changes they are making in the bill, but the government has a responsibility to give our municipalities the maximum amount of time to plan.

We obviously have some problems with the bill. I really wonder about an acre of land in downtown Toronto at Yonge and the Gardiner Expressway paying exactly the same taxes as an acre of rail land in the countryside. It just doesn't make sense to me, but that's the government's bill. CPR will pay to the city of Toronto the same property tax

for an acre of land as they'll pay to a rural municipality for an acre of land.

**Hon Al Palladini (Minister of Transportation):** We have to protect those rights of way.

**Mr Phillips:** To the Minister of Transportation, yes, and we also have to ensure that our municipalities, which rely on the property taxes, have fair property tax. It's just that I'm anxious to find the rationale for this.

The minister will not tell us how they're going to assess small businesses. I tell you, small businesses are going to face some very substantial property tax increases because the government's taking something called the business occupancy tax off. They've ordered that off. It's going back on to the realty taxes and small businesses are going to be dramatically impacted. We want to know how you're going to deal with that. You've got a bill that's sitting on the table there, but the government won't call it forward.

So the reason why we think it's a mistake to ram this bill through is that the government is implementing exactly the opposite of what its own handpicked panel recommended. David Crombie said he strongly opposes, and the whole panel unanimously agrees: Don't do this.

The Minister of Municipal Affairs said on a radio interview that it's a mistake to put these income redistribution programs on to property tax, and yet we're being asked to pass a bill that does that. The government is going to add substantially to property taxes by loading another \$660 million on at exactly the same time as the government plans to implement this bill.

Lastly, which is why I reacted so strongly to the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale, we may disagree with much in the property tax bill because we think it's laden with problems, and furthermore, incredibly, it gives to the Minister of Finance taxing powers that I've never seen before. The Minister of Finance is going to be setting mill rates for commercial properties. He's going to be setting mill rates for rights-of-way and for utilities. I've never seen so much taxing power given to a Minister of Finance, but that's the bill before us.

This is not some housekeeping bill that should be rushed through. It fundamentally changes policy in a way that is going to dramatically impact on people's lives in the province of Ontario, and it's not something to be rammed through with time allocation.

**Mr Gerretsen:** I completely concur with what my colleague has said with respect to the downloading on to municipalities, but there's one other issue that I would just like to address here today. It deals specifically with the motion that's been filed, which is a time allocation motion, which in effect is a closure motion. In effect, it is saying to this Parliament and to the people of Ontario: "We no longer want any debate on this bill. We now want to have it time-allocated and we want closure invoked."

When you look at this thing historically, I think it's fair to say that closure was something that was hardly ever invoked, particularly in this Parliament. I can well remember a very celebrated case not too long ago when Mr Kormos was on his feet for hours on end dealing with the insurance bill some time ago. Closure, of course, didn't

exist in those days, or governments only exercised it under the most extreme circumstances and situations.

As a result of the rule changes that have been adopted by this House, closure is almost becoming a fait accompli in just about everything. Let's just take a look at the significant bills that you've invoked closure on. You know, this may be one of these issues that the general public out there perhaps doesn't care all that much about, or so you think. But I think that people do care about their democratic institutions and do care about this place and the ability of members to discuss important pieces of legislation that are before the government and before the people of Ontario.

Rent control, Bill 96, you invoked time allocation and subsequently closure. Bill 99, the workers' compensation bill, another very important piece of legislation as far as this government is concerned, you did exactly the same thing; you invoked closure. Bill 142, workfare, what did you do? You again invoked closure. Bill 148, just last week, megacity number 2 that you brought here because you messed up the original bill that you had before the House some time last spring, again, what did you do? You invoked closure. And now another very important bill to the people of Ontario and to the municipalities, Bill 152.

The point I'm trying to make is that you, the government, by changing the rules, are attempting to make it more and more customary, as far as this place is concerned and as far as the province of Ontario is concerned, to invoke closure more often than not.

I'm telling you that in the long run our democratic institutions, institutions that all of us have fought long and hard for in this country, particularly over the last 100 years or so, are going to suffer. Yes, you'll get this through eventually because you've got the numbers, but you're doing the wrong thing. This is an opportunity for people to debate the issues. You may well recall that the reason you brought in the new rule changes was so that more people could get involved in the debate. What have you done in fact? You're cutting off debate because you're invoking the rule to time-allocate specific items, and therefore closure.

I know there are probably a lot of people out there who are saying: "Well, maybe it's not so bad. Maybe it should come to an end." But in the long run, the democratic institutions and the limited powers of authority that the opposition has in a situation like this are going to be hampered more and more. Our province and our democratic institutions that we have in this province are not going to be the better for it.

Now let's deal with the actual bill itself. I have a file here of just newspaper clippings from all over the province of Ontario where different municipal leaders — yes, some Liberal leaders, some no doubt NDP leaders, some no doubt Tory leaders — as well as municipal staff in community after community have indicated that if you implement the provisions of Bill 152 together with all the other stuff that you have implemented with respect to municipalities, the amount of services and the amount of dollars that it's going to take to provide those services in those

municipalities are going to rise substantially and property taxes will have to increase.

1720

I ask the government, are all these people wrong? Are all these people, who are either totally non-partisan, who are accountants, who are clerks in municipalities, who are chief administrative officers in municipalities as well as some political leaders, wrong? Are they all wrong? I don't think so. I think the government is wrong by insisting that this is a revenue-neutral proposition. You know it isn't true and I know it isn't true. The biggest — well, I've got to watch my words very carefully; I was going to say something that I know I'd have to withdraw — is this whole notion that somehow municipalities have bought into it.

You may recall the original downloading. There was about \$1.2 billion being downloaded on the municipalities. All the municipalities, through AMO and on their own, said, "We can never carry this." So they went back to the government and the government came back with a plan that, according to our estimates and according to the estimates of a lot of the municipal leaders in this province, is only going to download about \$663 million more in costs. Of course the municipalities said, "Well, being saddled with an extra \$660 million worth of costs is better than being saddled with \$1.2 billion of extra costs." Sure they said, "This is a better deal than we had before." But to take from that they somehow agreed with the overall downloading plan this government is implementing is absolute nonsense. Municipalities don't like it. They will get involved in services in which they have never been involved and they shouldn't be involved.

As has already been so adequately expressed by the member for Scarborough-Agincourt, when you look at some of the public health and social service additional costs being downloaded, study after study, including their own Crombie report, has clearly indicated that it is wrong to charge for health and social services on the property tax roll. It is a regressive tax rate. It is a regressive way to raise taxes. You set the tax rate once a year and that's all the money you're going to get. If there are any major dips in the economy in a particular area during that year so that you require extra money for social service costs or for health costs, you simply do not have the ability to react to it quickly enough.

That's why many years ago, back in the 1920s, 1930s, 1940s, 1950s and 1960s many of the social services and health care services were taken from the property tax rolls, out of the hands of the municipalities, and were funded through the income tax system and, later on, through the sales tax system. You're going back to a situation that existed maybe in the 1920s and 1930s in this province as far as funding the various services is concerned. It's simply the wrong thing to do.

It reaches some ridiculous situations. I know all of you here have heard me talk about the three island communities I represent which have ferry services that are being totally downloaded on them. In effect, both the Minister of Municipal Affairs and the Minister of Transportation are

saying, "We're not going to pay for those costs any more as of January 1." As a result, these island communities will have to increase their taxes anywhere from 400% to 800% of what they're currently charging their local people in order to have any kind of ferry services.

It doesn't end there; it goes further than that. Do you know that two of those municipalities — I haven't heard from the third one, but I'm sure the same thing applies to them — have received letters from the Solicitor General basically telling them, "As of January 1, since the OPP costs will have to be shared throughout Ontario, your little island municipality will owe the province in one case \$60,000 and in the other case \$90,000." These are communities that have a tax base of something like \$300,000 to \$500,000 per year, and they will have to come up with an extra \$60,000 or \$80,000 to pay for the policing.

You might say: "That's not so bad. They get services for that." I've got news for you. The police never come on to these islands. I'm advised by one of the reeves that on this one particular island the police may come three or four times a year. You know why? For the police to go there they have to take the same ferries everybody else takes. Basically, you don't have a lot of crime on those islands and there's no policing on those islands. So they're being charged for something that they don't get any services for at all.

These people in these communities, most of whom, or a very great number of them, were always Conservative supporters, are saying to themselves: "Why is this province doing this to us? First they take away our ferry boat subsidies. Now they're making us pay for policing costs for services we never get in these communities."

I realize that they are only two very small, isolated examples, but it was always my impression that whoever forms the government here governs for all the people of Ontario. You don't just isolate a group of 300 or 1,000 or 1,500 permanent residents and say: "I'm sorry. You're costing us too much. We're no longer looking after you." I don't think that's fair. I think it's abominable, quite frankly.

Where do we draw the line? What's next? Are we going to take a community at the end of a highway and say: "I'm sorry. Your road costs too much. We're not going to look after it any more"? Of course they've already done that too. In eastern Ontario, as I indicated earlier today, we've got four highways left. On all the other roads, the Minister of Transportation is basically saying: "They're local roads. Let them look after it." These are primarily in communities that simply will not be able to do that. They don't have the economic resources. They don't have the tax base to fund the kind of major reconstruction that may be necessary on those roads two or five or 10 years down the road.

We keep forgetting that the reason a lot of these provincial grants and subsidies came into being was because these local municipalities weren't able to look after some of these services in the past. This is a major piece of legislation, and to invoke closure is the wrong thing to do.

I almost wonder whether it's just by coincidence that these major pieces of legislation I talked about earlier — workers' compensation, rent control, megacity 2 and on and on — are being time allocated, that on those bills we are invoking closure.

The final comment I want to make, because I want to leave some time to my friends from the third party, is in response to the member for York-Mackenzie who piously and holier than thou says, "We want to consult with the people." As I indicated in this House last week, I would like him to bring me evidence of how many meaningful changes have been made to legislation as a result of the consultation process. As I've indicated in this House many times before, it is wrong to go to the people and ask for consultation after second reading. That should be done well before each party in this House stakes out their position on it.

If you did this at the local level, if everybody in a council took a position on an issue and then said, "Now I guess we'll see what the general public has to say about it," or "Now we're going to send it to the planning committee to see if a rezoning should take place," you would probably be hauled into court, because you need your consultation before you make those decisions.

Whereas I am greatly in favour of public consultation, to do it after second reading is the wrong time in the process to do it. We give expectations to people who make presentations before these various committees about some major changes that can be made to a piece of legislation, and it just hasn't happened. Let's 'fess up to the people of Ontario. Let's be honest with them and tell them that, tell them that straight out front.

There are many other costs. I've just highlighted two or three of the costs being downloaded to municipalities. We've got a whole other list dealing with public health, which is a total absurdity when you think about it. The entire health budget, health matters, is dealt with by the Ministry of Health, with the exception of public health. You ask yourself, why is public health being singled out for complete financing at the local level? It makes absolutely no sense.

We will be voting against this motion.

**Mr Hastings:** What's new?

**Mr Gerretsen:** My friends on the other side say, "What's new?" Well, I will tell you: Every time we vote for one of these motions, you will have taken democracy down another peg in this province.

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**Mr Baird:** You didn't vote for Sally Barnes.

**Mr Gerretsen:** I voted for good government, sir, and we're certainly not getting it right now.

Through you, Mr Speaker, I implore the members of the government to take a serious and hard look at this whole notion of time-allocating just about every item that comes to this House. Your rule changes were supposed to open up debates. I'm sure there are all sorts of quotes that I can find on matters that happened just within the last month or so when we discussed that. In effect, what you

have done is just found a more convenient way to silence the opposition. It's not right.

**Mr Marchese:** I want to thank the member for Kingston and The Islands for allowing me to have more time to speak on this matter, because as it appeared, given the way things were going today, the third party was going to be completely squeezed. I was hoping this would not become the norm, where the third party would not get the opportunity to speak on very important issues, so I'm assuming that this is simply an anomaly and that in the future we will have agreement to hopefully split the time with all three parties on most of these bills.

I listened very closely, as I always do, to the members of the government when they delivered speeches because I always find it informative. I listened to the member for Don Mills, Chair of Management Board, and he talked about why we are dealing with a time allocation motion on Bill 152. He says the reason for that is because he wants to allow public opportunity for input. Speaker, I don't believe that, and he knows that the public that's watching doesn't believe that either. They understand what time allocation means. It means that the government wants to throttle debate on important bills. That's what it means, and that's what it does when it presents time allocation motions in this House. It is throttling debate, diminishing opposition to its bill, and that is the purpose of a time allocation motion.

Why the rush to deal with a very important bill that I think has serious consequences I will never understand. The government is in a rush quite clearly because they want to offload the cost on to municipalities, even when they haven't figured out the issues around actually delivering the services. You've got to wonder about the competency of this government. There are serious consequences that flow from this bill, things they haven't figured out how to do, and yet they are in a rush to time-allocate this bill.

They're doing the same thing with Bill 136. Bill 136, in my view, is one of the most important bills we will be debating in this House. It is a bill that creates two new bureaucracies — Tory-appointed bureaucracies — to dictate labour relations. You know what this government wants to do next week? They want to have one week of hearings while the House is sitting. They don't want to travel.

You heard the member for Don Mills today talking about how he wants to listen to the public, he's interested in input and all that kind of stuff. At the same time, they have a motion dealing with Bill 136 that says: "We are going to throttle debate. How are we going to do that? We are not going to go around the province to hear from Ontarians. We're simply going to have a week of hearings while the House is sitting." Is that not in keeping with the policies and the *modus vivendi* of this government, which is that it is autocratic, dictatorial, arrogant and dismissive of public input?

I say to the people who are watching who might have an interest in labour relations, call the clerk on the standing committee on resources development and get yourself

on that list so you can appear before this House and raise your concerns, because this government is not going to give you another opportunity to speak on the matter. That's what this government is all about.

When they tell you they're interested in public input, I think you have seen, through the evidence of this government, that they're not interested in that. Remember the tenant protection package? I remember it well. I've sat on the committee for the last year and a half that we've been dealing with this issue. The members there said: "We want to listen to what the public has to say. We're concerned about tenants." We listened to them for months. You know what happened, member for York Mills? You guys didn't listen. You're listening now in pretence to show that you are listening, but you know that's not the case. I was there.

**Mr David Turnbull (York Mills):** We were there when you were the government. We know how you listened.

**Mr Marchese:** Sure, I know you were there when we were the government and you, member for York Mills, talked about how you were going to be different. You guys were going to be completely different because the *modus vivendi* of Tory policies and ideology is that you were going to be clean, because you've got the revolting Common Sense Revolution that you are upholding. You guys were going to be different, but listening is not something that comes easy to you guys.

**Mr Turnbull:** I remember Bob Rae saying he was going to be different.

**Mr Marchese:** If anything, we overconsulted, I've got to tell you. We overconsulted to the point that we got hurt. These fine Tories are saying to themselves, "How do we deal with the public?" They said, "We're going to deal with the public by telling them we're going to listen, but we're not."

Look at Bill 136. One week of hearings while the House is in session, four days. We're going to hear a couple of people and they're going to say, "We heard you," and they're going to send you back home and they're not going to listen to you, not to this and not to the other. That's what it's about. That's what this stuff is all about.

I heard the member for Don Mills talk about how they listened and how the municipalities came to you guys. Imagine this. The municipalities came to the government and they said: "Please give us these things. We want to be able to control this long list of services. We want to be able to control social assistance, child care, public health, ambulances, social housing, children's aid societies, GO Transit, transit operating and capital, ferries, airports, septic inspections, policing, provincial offences, libraries even, property assessment, managed forests, conservation lands, farm tax rebate."

Who are you trying to kid, my good friend from Don Mills? Do you think municipalities would be crazy enough, loony enough, to say, "We want to commit harakiri, so please help us"? Come on.

The way I see it, the municipalities went in as baritones and they came out as sopranos by the end of the discussion. That's what happened. If that analogy isn't clear, if the analogy of going in as a baritone and coming out as a soprano isn't clear enough, think of the analogy of having a gun to your head and then you will understand why municipalities said: "Yes, we'll take it. Of course we will do it. We'll take all these services and we'll be happy to do it. By the way, member for Don Mills, we're not going to raise property taxes as we do that."

Who are you trying to kid? These people, including the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale, were talking about how they trust municipalities, how these people are good and how these people are going to be able to manage the cost, because they don't want to raise property taxes. Are you kidding?

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There are only two options that flow from this. If you don't raise property taxes to deal with the serious offloading of services, you've got to cut services. There's just no other way out of it. You either cut services or you increase property taxes or you've got to do both. My feeling is they're going to have to do both to be able to deal with these problems; otherwise they won't be able to do it.

Think of the logic, just think about this for a moment. The member for Don Mills said, "We're taking off half of the education costs." In the beginning they were going to take all the education costs off the property tax system. You remember that. Then later, because of the tremendous public pressure, they decided that they were only going to take half of the education property taxes. If I'm a thinking person, I say to myself, "Why would they do that?" What is the motivation behind the government wanting to take education out of the property tax system? If at the end of the day these people say, "We're trying to arrive at a revenue-neutral situation by taking education out of the property tax," in this case now, half, and then offloading another whole list of services down to the municipality to arrive at a presumed revenue-neutral situation, why would you do it?

If you're a thinking person you would say, "Something is up here." Someone is playing a game of deception here, because otherwise it makes no sense. Why would you do anything that brings you to a revenue-neutral situation? I wouldn't do it. Why cause all these headaches to these municipalities having to deal with greater costs for social assistance, greater costs for child care and libraries and GO Transit and housing, go through that serious headache to arrive at a revenue-neutral situation? Are you crazy?

**Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton North):** No.

**Mr Marchese:** I tell you, someone is crazy. Some of your municipal Tory friends might not mind this. Granted, there are a couple of your guys who are out there thinking, "This is good for us." I understand that. But the majority of people understand that there is a game here. The real game has to do with this government downloading its services to the municipalities so it can deal with its own

financial problems, but in so doing you are going to wreck a whole lot of communities.

Think of the stupidity of this proposal, because it's serious. A number of people have said that things like social assistance, child care, public health and housing should all be funded by a provincial income tax system. Why? Because it's a little more progressive than passing it on to the property taxpayer.

I know, Speaker, you agree with this. If you had the opportunity to speak, you would be able to say so but I know you're pretty well throttled in your ability to be able to speak in this chamber. I know that you would agree with me because you, as a reasonable man, would say, "If we've got to pay for this service, would I want it to come out of income tax or my home?" You would say: "Yes, it makes sense. Take it out of income. Don't take it out the home because a lot of people invest all their life savings in a home and it's not fair to pay for welfare, child care, public health and housing out of the property tax system. It's not fair."

The government continues to say that what we're doing is disentangling. I was trying to remember the other word that the member for Don Mills used. Well, they haven't disentangled a bloody thing. What have they disentangled? Look here, social assistance is a shared responsibility between the province and the municipality. Disentangling means you take the responsibility from one level of government and it you give it to the other. But they haven't done that. You still have social assistance as a shared responsibility between the province and the municipality.

Everybody, including Mr Crombie, was probably telling you that you should take on social assistance as a provincial responsibility, but you guys decided that you weren't going to do that. You call this process disentangling, but you still have the municipalities picking up a heavy load and you still have the province mixed up in it. So how does it disentangle, Chair of Management Board? How does it do that? Explain it, because it's not clear to me and it's certainly not clear to thinking people who are watching this program. You haven't disentangled a thing. You've still got a complicated, confusing system that keeps a heavy burden on the municipality to pay for things provinces should pay for.

**Hon David Johnson:** Taxes are going down.

**Mr Marchese:** No, Minister, taxes are not going down. You've got it all wrong. When you offload all these things down to the municipalities, who do you think is going to pay? The people who are going to pay for this are two: home owners and tenants.

I don't mind having this political game with you guys here, because at the end of the day it's the public that's going to have to believe either you fine folks or the rest of us. We make the arguments, and at the end of the day they are the ones who will evaluate your performance in this House.

Some of you boys can say that we're the ones who create the myths, but you are the ones who've got the state apparatus; you boys have the money to be able to create the myths. That is why, when you introduce your bills, you

title them in the following manner. Listen to what your bill says: "An Act to improve Services, increase Efficiency and benefit Taxpayers by eliminating Duplication and reallocating Responsibilities between Provincial and Municipal Governments." What does this bill tell you? Nothing, except that it creates a mythology around what you believe will have an effect on the public.

All of your bills are titled in such a way as to create a mythology. Every one of your bills is titled to create a mythology. As you read it, people cannot but say: "What gives here? Something's up. It can't be that way, otherwise no government would title it as such." Are you going to believe these guys? No, you're not. I wouldn't believe it, because I would never dream of titling a bill in this way.

In keeping with the explanation I was giving about the purpose of this bill, it is to download the responsibility to the municipalities, which eventually will have to suffer the wrath of the home owners and the tenants when they pick up the tab or suffer the loss of services.

Here's the explanatory note given on the first page of this bill. It says: "The bill is part of the government's Who Does What initiative. Its purpose is to effect a reallocation of responsibilities...." You know what that means, "to effect a reallocation of responsibilities." That's fine, legal language to say: "Hey, boys, you're about to pay. We're shedding our responsibilities and giving them to you. You guys have been the ones telling us you wanted it, and by the way, you guys are not going to face tax increases, and by the way, taxes are going to go down." I don't think so. Even Terry Mundell, the president of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario — I don't think he's a friend of mine; I think he's one of yours. I could be wrong.

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**Mr Spina:** We don't know who he's for.

**Mr Marchese:** He's to the right, possibly, but he's not one of ours. He's certainly leaning to your side, I would think. None the less, he's the president of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario and he estimated the cost of the downloading to municipalities to be approximately \$900 million. You guys can laugh and say, "No, he's wrong, he's myth-making," but these guys are in the business. That's what they do on a daily basis. They know what this language means when you guys say "to effect a reallocation of responsibilities." Everybody knows it.

What madness, I argue, for a provincial government to offload housing responsibilities to a municipality. I consider that to be madness. If you guys wanted to effect a reallocation of responsibilities, you should have taken over all of housing. If you guys wanted to disentangle social assistance, member from somewhere in Orangeville, you would have taken over all of that. But you boys didn't want to do that.

**Mr Spina:** Why don't you bring the national unity issue into this?

**Mr Marchese:** On the housing stuff —

**Mr Spina:** Bring national unity into it.

**Mr Marchese:** Speaker, control him.

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Member for Brampton North, please.

**Mr Marchese:** Thank you very much. You know that very few jurisdictions in the world, if any — I don't know of any; there might be — have housing responsibilities to the municipalities except this reptilian government, except the madness of this government.

**Mr Spina:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: That's an unparliamentary phrase; it's imputing the motive of the government and the members.

**The Speaker:** I don't think "reptilian" is imputing motive, but it sounds to me to be —

**Mr Gerretsen:** It sure is slithery.

**The Speaker:** Let me just finish. "Reptilian" is not imputing motive, but it certainly isn't parliamentary. It doesn't add to the debate here, so I'd ask the member for Fort York to withdraw it.

**Mr Marchese:** Speaker, you were almost on the verge of ruling correctly, I thought.

**The Speaker:** Member for Fort York, you're in dangerous country here. It's either withdraw or don't withdraw — that's your decision — but I don't want to debate with you about whether or not it's parliamentary.

**Mr Marchese:** I guess I will have to withdraw the words "reptilian government."

**The Speaker:** "Government" was fine.

**Mr Marchese:** What about "cold-blooded government"? Is that okay? The other word that you ruled out of order is really the intent —

**The Speaker:** When did I rule it out of order? I ruled it out of order?

**Mr Marchese:** You did. You said it was not parliamentary. But if you describe a government that I consider to be cold-blooded, I think that's what that word means.

**Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt):** A bunch of snakes.

**Mr Marchese:** It's the same idea.

**Mr Spina:** It's the same point of order, Speaker.

**The Speaker:** A point of order, member for York-Mackenzie.

**Mr Spina:** The honourable member from —

**The Speaker:** No, I said "York-Mackenzie."

**Mr Klees:** Mr Speaker, with all respect, I do believe you have ruled on the issue of "reptilian." In the theological sense, "reptilian" refers to the father of lies. I believe if the member continues to justify his use of the term "reptilian" —

**The Speaker:** Can we get to the point here, member for York-Mackenzie.

**Mr Klees:** I would ask that you ask him to withdraw what he just said.

**The Speaker:** Who?

**Mr Klees:** The member who just said it and the interjection by my honourable colleague the member for Nickel Belt.

**The Speaker:** I didn't hear either of them, but I will give them the opportunity of withdrawing if they said anything unparliamentary. Member for Nickel Belt?

**Mr Laughren:** If calling this bunch of bandits is unparliamentary, I withdraw the word "snakes."

**The Speaker:** There comes a time when you're going to eventually withdraw or not withdraw, because I'm sure the member for Fort York wants to finish his speech.

**Mr Laughren:** I withdraw.

**Mr Marchese:** In this House, there's always a certain measure of comedy, and comedy sometimes has a great deal of seriousness attached to it. When you describe a government, you need an image to describe the modus operandi of the government. Otherwise, if you use abstract words, people won't understand it. That's why we often come up with words that are descriptive, highly images: so that people have a good sense of the soul of the government. That's why we do it.

On the housing issue, because that's where I was, very few jurisdictions download that to municipalities; everybody knows that, except the loonies in this government. Speaker, you've got to cut the members some slack on the language. You can't just sanitize everything we say. You can't do that.

On the housing issue, a number of mayors from large municipalities wanted a meeting with the Premier. Evidently he met with them and said, "Okay, we promise to do a study of the cost of downloading housing." That was a while ago. Has anybody on the government side or the opposition benches heard about what is happening to that assumed or proposed study on the download of housing? Of course not. Why would the government do a study that would harm itself? That's what it's about. The reason they are not doing the study is they know full well that the study —

**Mr Tom Froese (St Catharines-Brock):** You know all about studies.

**Mr Spina:** Would you rather have \$20 million?

**The Speaker:** Member for Brampton North.

**Mr Marchese:** I love the participation of the House, Speaker; I do. It's just that often I have to refer to see where they are from and it's hard and it takes a lot of time. But I like it. Don't dismiss them out of hand.

I'm waiting for Mike Harris and M. Leach, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, for this study. I'm waiting for these guys to come up with a study, because I want to see it, and if Mike Harris, the Premier, promised it, I think it should happen.

I want to see it, because I tell you when I see it, it will reveal what we have all been saying, and that is that the municipalities are about to get a big whack. They're about to pick up costs they never dreamed of. They're about to have communities competing against each other for a certain level of service as it relates to everything I have mentioned, as it relates to social assistance, child care, public health, ambulances, social housing, children's aid societies, GO Transit and on and on.

You will find people in all communities competing for a part of the pie as it relates to each and every one of the services they are about to pick up — voluntarily, as the member for Don Mills said; not with any gun to the head, but voluntarily pick up — because they want to be able to

manage these things. You've got to believe somebody is crazy if they say that. I've got to tell you, someone is crazy if somebody in the municipality says, "Yes, we love to commit hara-kiri." I tell you somebody is really nuts and they need assistance awfully quick.

They want to be able to make amendments to the Building Code Act, the Environmental Protection Act and the Ontario Water Resources Act, which does something of the sort, meaning regulation of septic systems is being transferred from the Environmental Protection Act to the Building Code Act. The appeals will be transferred from the Environmental Appeal Board to the building code commission and the courts.

For me, this is a matter of serious environmental concern. But what are they doing? They pass this responsibility where? To the Building Code Act. You know the connection between builders, people with money in their pockets and this government. You know the connection. I've seen it. Everybody knows about this. They shift this responsibility away from the Environmental Protection Act and pass it on to the building code, where the builders, the people with money, will have an easy time to influence the appropriate people in that municipality. That's what this is all about. This government wants to facilitate their agenda.

This is a bill that has tremendous proportion. This bill should not be rushed by this government. It should be assessed very carefully. They should tread very slowly. They should give themselves plenty of time to know what they're doing. I tell you, they don't have a clue what they're doing. If some of you have the opportunity to read this in terms of what it does, the offloading to municipalities — the fact is that many of the things they've proposed are not clear as to who does what. This government is seriously incompetent and you've got to mistrust their judgement.

There's a lot that could be said about this bill. There's a lot to be said about Bill 136. I urge people to call the clerk of the standing committee on resources development to get themselves on to speak, because they are throttling debate even on that particular issue.

**The Speaker:** Mr Johnson has moved government notice of motion number 39. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members; it will be a five-minute bell.

*The division bells rang from 1800 to 1805.*

**The Speaker:** All those in favour of the government motion, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

#### Ayes

Amott, Ted  
Baird, John R.  
Bassett, Isabel  
Beaubien, Marcel  
Boushy, Dave

Hardeman, Ernie  
Harnick, Charles  
Hastings, John  
Hodgson, Chris  
Hudak, Tim

O'Toole, John  
Ouellette, Jerry J.  
Palladini, Al  
Pettit, Trevor  
Ross, Lillian

Brown, Jim  
 Carroll, Jack  
 Chudleigh, Ted  
 Cunningham, Dianne  
 DeFaria, Carl  
 Doyle, Ed  
 Ecker, Janet  
 Elliott, Brenda  
 Fisher, Barbara  
 Flaherty, Jim  
 Ford, Douglas B.  
 Froese, Tom  
 Galt, Doug  
 Grimmett, Bill  
 Guzzo, Garry J.

Jackson, Cameron  
 Johnson, Bert  
 Johnson, David  
 Jordan, W. Leo  
 Kells, Morley  
 Klees, Frank  
 Leach, Al  
 Marland, Margaret  
 Martiniuk, Gerry  
 Maves, Bart  
 Munro, Julia  
 Murdoch, Bill  
 Mushinski, Marilyn  
 Newman, Dan

Runciman, Robert W.  
 Saunderson, William  
 Shea, Derwyn  
 Sheehan, Frank  
 Smith, Bruce  
 Snobelen, John  
 Spina, Joseph  
 Tilson, David  
 Tsubouchi, David H.  
 Turnbull, David  
 Wettlaufer, Wayne  
 Witmer, Elizabeth  
 Wood, Bob  
 Young, Terence H.

**Nays**

Bradley, James J.  
 Brown, Michael A.  
 Caplan, David  
 Churley, Marilyn  
 Cleary, John C.  
 Cullen, Alex  
 Gerretsen, John  
 Gravelle, Michael

Kormos, Peter  
 Kwinter, Monte  
 Lalonde, Jean-Marc  
 Laughren, Floyd  
 Lessard, Wayne  
 Marchese, Rosario  
 Martin, Tony

McLeod, Lyn  
 Phillips, Gerry  
 Pupatello, Sandra  
 Ramsay, David  
 Sergio, Mario  
 Wildman, Bud  
 Wood, Len

**The Speaker:** All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

**Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers):** The ayes are 58; the nays are 22.

**The Speaker:** I declare the motion carried.

It now being past 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock tomorrow.

*The House adjourned at 1808.*

**ERRATUM**

No.	Page	Column	Line	Should read:
229A	12073	2	50 and	petition signed by hundreds of residents from 10, 30 and 40 Gordonridge Place. They are again quite concerned
	12074	1	1	

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon / L'hon Hilary M. Weston

Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Chris Stockwell

Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers

Clerk Assistant / Greffière adjointe: Deborah Deller

Clerks at the Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Algoma	Wildman, Bud (ND)	Frontenac-Addington	Vankoughnet, Bill (PC)
Algoma-Manitoulin	Brown, Michael A. (L)	Grey-Owen Sound	Murdoch, Bill (PC)
Beaches-Woodbine	Lankin, Frances (ND)	Guelph	Elliott, Brenda (PC)
Brampton North / -Nord	Spina, Joseph (PC)	Halton Centre / -Centre	Young, Terence H. (PC)
Brampton South / -Sud	Clement, Tony (PC)	Halton North / -Nord	Chudleigh, Ted (PC)
Brant-Haldimand	Preston, Peter L. (PC)	Hamilton Centre / -Centre	Christopherson, David (ND)
Brantford	Johnson, Ron (PC)	Hamilton East / -Est	Agostino, Dominic (L)
Bruce	Fisher, Barbara (PC)	Hamilton Mountain	Pettit, Trevor (PC)
Burlington South / -Sud	<b>Jackson, Hon / L'hon Cameron (PC)</b> Minister without Portfolio (seniors issues) / ministre sans portefeuille (affaires des personnes âgées)	Hamilton West / -Ouest	Ross, Lillian (PC)
	Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Hastings-Peterborough	Danford, Harry (PC)
Cambridge	<b>Sterling, Hon / L'hon Norman W. (PC)</b> Minister of Environment and Energy / ministre de l'Environnement et de l'Énergie	High Park-Swansea	Shea, Derwyn (PC)
Carleton	Morin, Gilles E. (L)	Huron	Johns, Helen (PC)
	Carroll, Jack (PC)	Kenora	Miclash, Frank (L)
Carleton East / -Est	Wood, Len (ND)	Kingston and The Islands / Kingston et Les Îles	Gerretsen, John (L)
Chatham-Kent	Bisson, Gilles (ND)	Kitchener	Wettlaufer, Wayne (PC)
Cochrane North / -Nord	Cleary, John C. (L)	Kitchener-Wilmot	Leadston, Gary L. (PC)
Cochrane South / -Sud	<b>Johnson, Hon / L'hon David (PC)</b> Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, government House leader / président du Conseil de gestion, leader parlementaire du gouvernement	Lake Nipigon / Lac-Nipigon	Pouliot, Gilles (ND)
Cornwall	Silipo, Tony (ND)	Lambton	Beaubien, Marcel (PC)
Don Mills	Castrilli, Annamarie (L)	Lanark-Renfrew	Jordan, W. Leo (PC)
	Tilson, David (PC)	Lawrence	Cordiano, Joseph (L)
Dovercourt	Flaherty, Jim (PC)	Leeds-Grenville	<b>Runciman, Hon / L'hon Robert W. (PC)</b> Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services / solliciteur général et ministre des Services correctionnels
Downsview	O'Toole, John R. (PC)	Lincoln	Sheehan, Frank (PC)
Dufferin-Peel	<b>Ecker, Hon / L'hon Janet (PC)</b> Minister of Community and Social Services / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires	London Centre / -Centre	Boyd, Marion (ND)
Durham Centre / -Centre	Munro, Julia (PC)	London North / -Nord	<b>Cunningham, Hon / L'hon Dianne (PC)</b> Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Durham East / -Est	<b>Saunderson, Hon / L'hon William (PC)</b> Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism / ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et du Tourisme	London South / -Sud	Wood, Bob (PC)
Durham West / -Ouest	North, Peter (Ind)	Markham	<b>Tsubouchi, Hon / L'hon David H. (PC)</b> Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations / ministre de la Consommation et du Commerce
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Eglinton	Crozier, Bruce (L)	Mississauga East / -Est	DeFaria, Carl (PC)
	Ford, Douglas B. (PC)	Mississauga North / -Nord	<b>Snobelen, Hon / L'hon John (PC)</b> Minister of Education and Training / ministère de l'Éducation et de la Formation
Elgin	Kells, Morley (PC)	Mississauga South / -Sud	Marland, Margaret (PC)
Essex-Kent	Hastings, John (PC)	Mississauga West / -Ouest	<b>Sampson, Hon / L'hon Rob (PC)</b> Minister without Portfolio (privatization) / ministre sans portefeuille (privatisation)
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Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Marchese, Rosario (ND)		
Etobicoke-Rexdale			
Etobicoke West / -Ouest			
Fort William			
Fort York			

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Niagara Falls	Maves, Bart (PC)	Sarnia	Boushy, Dave (PC)
Niagara South / -Sud	Hudak, Tim (PC)	Sault Ste Marie / Sault-Sainte-Marie	Martin, Tony (ND)
Nickel Belt	Laughren, Floyd (ND)	Scarborough-Agincourt	Phillips, Gerry (L)
Nipissing	<b>Harris, Hon / L'hon Michael D. (PC)</b> Premier and President of the Executive Council / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif	Scarborough Centre / -Centre	Newman, Dan (PC)
Norfolk	Barrett, Toby (PC)	Scarborough East / -Est	Gilchrist, Steve (PC)
Northumberland	Galt, Doug (PC)	Scarborough-Ellesmere	<b>Mushinski, Hon / L'hon Marilyn</b> (PC) Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation / ministre des Affaires civiques, de la Culture et des Loisirs
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Oakwood	Colle, Mike (L)	Scarborough West / -Ouest	Brown, Jim (PC)
Oriole	Caplan, David	Simcoe Centre / -Centre	Tascona, Joseph N. (PC)
Oshawa	Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Simcoe East / -Est	McLean, Allan K. (PC)
Ottawa Centre / -Centre	Patten, Richard (L)	Simcoe West / -Ouest	<b>Wilson, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC)</b> Minister of Health / ministre de la Santé
Ottawa East / -Est	Grandmaître, Bernard (L)		
Ottawa-Rideau	Guzzo, Garry J. (PC)		
Ottawa South / -Sud	McGuinty, Dalton (L) Leader of the Opposition / chef de l'opposition		
Ottawa West / -Ouest	Cullen, Alex		
Oxford	Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Sudbury	Bartolucci, Rick (L)
Parkdale	Ruprecht, Tony (L)	Sudbury East / -Est	Martel, Shelley (ND)
Parry Sound	<b>Eves, Hon / L'hon Ernie L. (PC)</b> Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance / vice-premier ministre, ministre des Finances	Timiskaming	Ramsay, David (L)
Perth	Johnson, Bert (PC)	Victoria-Haliburton	<b>Hodgson, Hon / L'hon Chris (PC)</b> Minister of Natural Resources, Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre des Richesses naturelles, ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Peterborough	Stewart, R. Gary (PC)		
Port Arthur	Gravelle, Michael (L)		
Prescott and Russell / Prescott et Russell	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Waterloo North / -Nord	<b>Witmer, Hon / L'hon Elizabeth (PC)</b> Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail
Prince Edward-Lennox- South Hastings / Prince Edward-Lennox- Hastings-Sud	Fox, Gary (PC)	Welland-Thorold	Kormos, Peter (ND)
Quinte	Rollins, E.J. Douglas (PC)	Wellington	Arnott, Ted (PC)
Rainy River	Hampton, Howard (ND) Leader of the New Democratic Party / Chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique	Wentworth East / -Est	Doyle, Ed (PC)
	Conway, Sean G. (L)	Wentworth North / -Nord	Skarica, Toni (PC)
	Churley, Marilyn (ND)	Willowdale	<b>Harnick, Hon / L'hon Charles (PC)</b> Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
Renfrew North / -Nord		Wilson Heights	Kwinter, Monte (L)
Riverdale		Windsor-Riverside	Lessard, Wayne
S-D-G & East Grenville / S-D-G et Grenville-Est	Villeneuve, Hon / L'hon Noble (PC) Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales, ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones	Windsor-Sandwich	Pupatello, Sandra (L)
	Bassett, Isabel (PC)	Windsor-Walkerville	Duncan, Dwight (L)
	Bradley, James J. (L)	York Centre / -Centre	<b>Palladini, Hon / L'hon Al (PC)</b> Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports
	Froese, Tom (PC)		
St Andrew-St Patrick	Leach, Hon / L'hon Al (PC) Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement	York East / -Est	Parker, John L. (PC)
St Catharines		York Mills	Turnbull, David (PC)
St Catharines-Brock		York-Mackenzie	Klees, Frank (PC)
St George-St David		Yorkview	Sergio, Mario (L)
		York South / -Sud	Kennedy, Gerard (L)

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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## Legislative Assembly of Ontario

First Session, 36<sup>th</sup> Parliament

## Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Première session, 36<sup>e</sup> législature

# Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

# Journal des débats (Hansard)

Wednesday 17 September 1997

Mercredi 17 septembre 1997



Speaker  
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Président  
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

Clerk  
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier  
Claude L. DesRosiers

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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 17 September 1997

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 17 septembre 1997

*The House met at 1332.  
Prayers.*

### MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

#### CANADA NEWSWIRE

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** Once again, the Conservative government of Mike Harris is taking another step to avoid scrutiny and accountability by the Queen's Park news media by trying to bypass those individuals who have the most knowledge and background on provincial issues and who are likely to confront the Premier and his ministers with the toughest questions.

By hiring Canada NewsWire to be the official primary disseminator of Ontario government news releases, the Harris news manipulators can send out at taxpayers' expense their propaganda without the kind of scrutiny that is essential to a healthy democracy.

This latest initiative is only the most recent attempt by the Harris public relations unit to dodge criticism and questions by informed members of the news media. The purpose of rule changes, as well as greasing the skids for radical right-wing legislation, was to restrict debate by MPPs and make it more difficult for the legislative press gallery to cover the important issues of the day.

With ministers increasingly holding press conferences outside of Queen's Park and by embarking upon expensive, self-serving, blatant political advertising on television and radio and newspapers and by mail at taxpayers' expense, the Harris propagandists are determined to control the message that reaches the Ontario electorate.

With Conrad Black and other media giants reducing their workforce and pulling the reporters from the provincial parliamentary scene, the Harris crowd hopes to be free to exercise full control over the news and those who disseminate it. Democracy is the real loser.

#### SEXUAL HARASSMENT

**Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre):** On September 23, a new inquest will begin in Chatham into the death of Theresa Vince. Theresa Vince was shot by her immediate supervisor in their workplace, a supervisor who had been accused of sexually harassing her in the workplace.

This is a woman whose death has created a great deal of action within the community, both by her family and by

those who work with women who are abused in these situations. Yesterday, the supporting groups from the sexual assault centre and the women's centre in Chatham released a booklet that has been printed and will be distributed as a result of the over \$5,000 that has been contributed in Theresa Vince's name. This booklet talks about how to deal with sexual harassment in the workplace.

All the family and those who support the Vinces are very disappointed that this government has consistently refused to agree with their request that there be a specific week dedicated to the prevention of sexual harassment in the workplace. They are distressed that of the \$27 million over five years announced by the women's issues minister, no money is earmarked to deal with the very serious problem of sexual harassment in the workplace. We do not want Theresa Vince to have died in vain and we call on the government to act.

#### OPP HEADQUARTERS

**Mr W. Leo Jordan (Lanark-Renfrew):** I am very pleased to report that the new Ontario Provincial Police eastern region headquarters, located at the Rideau Regional Centre in Montague township, was officially opened on September 11.

This headquarters will administer policing from Trenton east to Cornwall and north to Deep River and area. It serves approximately 1.5 million people in 14 counties.

Through this endeavour, three districts have been amalgamated into one. Some 45 Ontario Provincial Police jobs are centred in Smiths Falls and we are making efficient use of existing facilities at the Rideau Regional Centre. Through teamwork and support from the community, we are bringing two provincial services under two ministries together as part of one facility.

This could not have been achieved without the help of the Honourable Bob Runciman, the Honourable David Tsubouchi, Commissioner O'Grady, Chief Superintendent Eamer, Wynn Turner from the Rideau Regional Centre and the Honourable Janet Ecker. Special thanks go to Bud Loney and Clayton Flemming as the leaders who generated the public support needed to accomplish our goal.

This is a clear example of our government's commitment to do better business for less capital and operating costs.

## PUBLIC SERVICE AND LABOUR RELATIONS REFORM

**Mr Frank Mclash (Kenora):** My statement is directed to the Premier and the Minister of Labour. It concerns the government's anti-labour Bill 136.

Premier, I've had the opportunity to meet with many hardworking public sector workers in my riding who are concerned about the implications of your government's anti-labour legislation.

As an MPP representing a northern region, I know the value of teachers, police officers, firefighters and nurses to our communities. Let me read from a letter I recently received from a nurse who stated:

"Nurses have worked hard to provide possible solutions for restructuring the health care system and giving quality care. The slash-and-burn scenario of the Harris government's quick fixes only shows what the financial pencil-pushers know about, which adversely affects quality patient care.

"Bill 136 has a major impact on all facets of health care as the ability to pay becomes the watchword of the Ontario government — not quality of care. It does not take a genius to see what this legislation will do in a supposedly democratic society.

"When power is given to governments the rights of the workers will be suppressed."

Collective agreements, benefits, pay grids and jobs will be inconsequential, as unions will be powerless to bargain. Working conditions will deteriorate as the trend for a more flexible workforce escalates.

Instead of this government bringing forward legislation that brings workers and employers together, the Minister of Labour and her colleagues have done what they do best: brought forward Bill 136, which creates a climate of confrontation.

1340

## OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

**Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South):** I rise today to raise an issue in this House that is unfortunately becoming quite a trend when it comes to labour relations in Ontario. In my constituency office over the last number of months there has been a very marked increase in the number of complaints we've received at our office about the treatment workers have been getting from the employment standards branch vis-à-vis workplace problems they've had with their employers.

I had one young gentleman in my office recently who was fired by an employer on the basis of having refused to do unsafe work. When that particular employee went to the labour relations people to get some advice about how to proceed because he was not represented by a union, he was really not given any kind of support and left under the understanding that there was not very much for him to do, even though today, barring the government changing it, that employee has rights under the health and safety act that provide that if an employee refuses unsafe work and

the employer in any way tries to intimidate him or her, there is some remedy on the part of the employee.

It's not only one incident that concerns me. What concerns me is the frequency and numbers of such complaints that I've been receiving at my constituency office. I want to put the government on notice that I, along with the rest of my colleagues in the NDP caucus, am going to be looking into this issue much more closely to find out why this pattern is developing. I think it is because of the attitude of this government towards workers in this province.

## EMPLOYMENT RESOURCE CENTRE

**Mr Ted Arnott (Wellington):** Last Friday I joined my colleagues the members for Guelph and York-Mackenzie at the official opening of the Wellington County Employment Resource Centre. Our employment resource centre is an important component of the county's efforts to link people on welfare with training programs and other work opportunities. In implementing the Ontario Works program our county is working hard to fulfil the provincial government's objective of reforming the social assistance system by actively helping people on welfare find the work and training opportunities that they need.

I believe that most people on welfare want to work. The resource centre will help able-bodied people enter the workforce by providing information on employment-related services, education and training programs, as well as giving them access to computers, photocopiers and fax machines. I am very encouraged by the county's efforts to give people the tools they need to find work and a more promising future.

I'm convinced that this new employment-focused approach is working. Since 1995, when this government first took office, the general welfare caseload in Wellington has dropped by 38%, more than twice the provincial average of 16%. Ontario is leading the country in job creation, with 33,000 new jobs last month alone, so I know that people looking for work are having an easier time finding jobs.

My thanks to the county and its staff for helping people help themselves, and my best wishes to Ontario Works participants as they take advantage of the new resources and opportunities available to them through this new approach.

## ASSISTANCE TO FLOOD VICTIMS

**Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur):** Last July 2 a torrential rainstorm hit the Thunder Bay area causing severe flooding in Shuniah township which damaged many private properties and completely washed out sections of Lakeshore Drive. Since that time Shuniah township council and I have been calling on the province to declare Shuniah a disaster area and make the community eligible therefore for assistance under the Ontario disaster relief fund.

Yesterday we finally received a response from Municipal Affairs Minister Leach, and I am most unhappy to

report that the minister will not support Shuniah's private property owners in their recovery efforts. The reason? It seems that despite the minister's agreement that serious damage was done during the flooding, it's not considered serious enough under the present guidelines of the province's disaster relief program. Clearly the guidelines need to be changed so that an acknowledged disaster such as the one that hit Shuniah can qualify for assistance.

However, I am pleased to report that the door is not completely closed on possible assistance for Shuniah. The minister says he's still prepared to look at a special assistance grant to reimburse the council for the \$250,000 cost of repairing the washed-out portions of Lakeshore Drive. Minister, on this point let me be very clear: Provincial funding to pay for the washout is absolutely vital. If you won't help with the damage to private property, I would hope and demand you would at least see that the same residents do not face a huge property tax increase to pay for this unforeseen event.

#### RIVERDALE COMMUNITY BUSINESS CENTRE

**Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale):** I am proud to tell the House today about the opening of the Riverdale Community Business Centre. The opening will take place on Saturday, September 27, at 742 Queen Street East. We will begin at 2 pm with the ribbon-cutting ceremony and the festivities will continue until 5 pm.

Riverdale Community Business Centre is the result of the efforts, dedication and long hours of hard work of many people in Riverdale. It all began with a meeting I called in the community in November 1993 as a result of our government's introduction of Jobs Ontario Community Action program. Even though the Harris government cancelled support for community economic development, Riverdale continued to develop its plan and was successful in receiving funding from Human Resources Development Canada to continue its work. The Riverdale Community Business Centre is the result of all these efforts.

I'm very proud of what the community has accomplished, and I would invite all the people of Riverdale to come out and join us on September 27 at 742 Queen Street East from 2 pm to 5 pm.

Congratulations to all the people of Riverdale who made this business centre the success it's going to be.

#### ALZHEIMER DISEASE

**Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford):** Today, local Alzheimer societies across Canada are holding coffee breaks to raise awareness of this debilitating disease.

Alzheimer's is a degenerative brain disorder that destroys vital brain cells. It's a cruel disease, and there is no cure.

Today in Oxford county there are 50 Alzheimer Coffee Breaks taking place. They're being held in homes, businesses, legions, school cafeterias, social agencies and many other locations. In fact, this morning in downtown

Woodstock a public coffee break was held in Museum Square to bring attention to this disease. In Ingersoll it is being held at the Zehrs store.

These events will focus not only on Alzheimer disease but on its effects on those with it and on their friends and families. Along with awareness, the events will also help to raise money to fund programs to support those people affected by Alzheimer's, their families and the efforts to find a cure.

Between 80,000 and 100,000 Ontarians have Alzheimer disease and related dementia. With the aging of our population, it is projected that over the next 10 years the number of people with Alzheimer's will increase by 50%.

Alzheimer's presents a unique challenge not only to the patients living with the disease but also to their caregivers, who are often family members.

I would certainly like to commend and thank all those who are caring for persons with this disease. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank all the volunteers in my riding and those across the province who are contributing time, energy and money to make Alzheimer Coffee Breaks a success.

#### REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

##### STANDING COMMITTEE ON REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

**Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton):** I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on regulations and private bills and move its adoption.

**Clerk at the Table (Mr Todd Decker):** Your committee begs to report the following bill without amendment:

Bill Pr65, An Act respecting the City of Hamilton.

Your committee recommends that Bill Pr88, An Act respecting Lansing Co-operative Nursery School, be not reported.

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed.

Statements by ministries?

**Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier):** Mr Speaker, I have a brief statement to make. I've had some indication from the opposition parties that they would like me to do this outside of a normal minister's statement, which I gather would require unanimous consent. I'm in the hands of the House. I'm happy to do that if you'd like.

**The Speaker:** Do we have unanimous consent to make a statement outside of ministers' statements on the issue of national unity, and responses? Agreed.

1350

NATIONAL UNITY  
UNITÉ NATIONALE

**Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier):** I am very pleased today to be able to update all members in the Legislature on developments of the past weekend in Calgary, where I met with eight of my fellow premiers and two territorial leaders.

For the past two years, I and the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs have been working together with our counterparts on ways to strengthen this great country. I believe the Calgary meeting was a productive and important one in these ongoing efforts.

Specifically, this past weekend we agreed unanimously that it is time to consult Canadians directly on how best to strengthen the Canadian federation. We agreed to a seven-point framework for discussion that represents a starting point for consultation with the citizens of Canada in our respective jurisdictions. While this framework marks an important step in renewing the federation, it is only a beginning. We agreed we can only achieve a strong, unified Canada if we have a country that works. Governments must work in partnership to ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of the federation, particularly in the delivery of social programs.

I'm pleased that the agreed framework for this discussion very clearly recognizes this. The provinces and territories renewed their commitment to work towards cooperative arrangements with the federal government as set out in the statement on social policy renewal that was released at the annual premiers' conference in August.

The nine premiers, the territorial leaders and the Prime Minister have agreed to meet this fall at a first ministers' conference to discuss social policy issues. I hope the Premier of Quebec will agree to attend as well. Our belief is that these discussions will help pave the way to greater cooperation between governments in the health care system and other social policy areas. We also hope the discussions will result in the federal government and the provinces working together to address the urgent needs of our unemployed young people.

The framework for discussion also sets out for public consultation some points about Canada. It speaks to the equality of citizens and the equal status of the provinces. It recognizes the gift of diversity that runs throughout Canadian society, and of our tradition of respect for that diversity. It speaks of our tolerance, compassion and equality of opportunity, characteristics of which I believe we're all proud. It also notes the unique character of Quebec society, including its French-speaking majority, its culture and its tradition of civil law. In addition, it suggests that any powers conferred on one province must be available to all provinces.

As I've said, this is a framework for discussion. These statements will help guide consultations with people, which will be held in all of the provinces and in the territories in the coming months. These consultations will

attempt to engage the citizens of Canada as creatively as possible and as fully as possible in discussions to guide the future of our country. The framework is not intended to be exhaustive, and each province will determine the nature and scope of their consultations, acknowledging that the government should act as a catalyst for the discussions but not necessarily lead them. The premiers will meet again to report on the progress of our discussions.

As well, the premiers and the territorial leaders have reiterated their commitment to meet with aboriginal leaders to follow up on their annual premiers' conference held in St Andrews. This meeting is tentatively scheduled to take place in November in Winnipeg. It may be finalized now, but that was the tentative date while we were in Calgary.

It's not in the statements that I handed out, but I want to say, if I might, that in the past we've had very well intentioned consultations, discussions on how to make the federation work better, on how to deal with the situation where Quebec did not feel the Constitution reflected their aspirations. We have done so, and I have done so in opposition, through several successive governments. I want to praise that non-partisanship throughout that period of time that all members of this House who were there then and who are here now have displayed in this, the encouragement that the two leaders gave me as I met with them before I went to Calgary, and our desire to work as cooperatively as possible with all members of the Legislature in developing the appropriate consultations for the people of Ontario.

**Ms Annamarie Castrilli (Downsview):** Let me first thank the Premier for his statement in the House here today. We agree with him that national unity is an important issue. Ontario has had a historic role in the building of this nation, and more recently in nation-keeping. We have a vested interest in a strong Canada if we are to grow, compete and prosper into the next millennium.

Dans ce cas, il est aussi vrai que l'Ontario a des liens très forts avec la province de Québec, des liens qui sont le résultat d'une histoire marquée par le respect.

Our history in Ontario shows how strongly we believe in the value of a united Canada. Anecdotally, it is a testament to the strength of this country, to the richness of this country, to the respect that we have for diversity that a child of immigrants such as myself can stand in this House and speak about the importance of a united Canada and all of its parts.

Under the leadership of Frank McKenna, this year's chair of the premiers' conference, the premiers have reached a seven-point agreement. This agreement will form the basis of a framework for discussion on Canadian unity. This is welcome. But I want to remind the Premier that while there is urgency to respond to that agreement, there is no constitutional crisis. We must continue to dialogue and certainly consult with the people of Ontario, but you must never forget that there are other real needs of Ontario — health, education and the quality of our lives.

My party is pledged to a united Canada. Our leader has been very clear on this. He stated just yesterday:

"The good news is that we've achieved some consensus on this wording. I think the important thing is what it means to the people of Quebec — not the separatists, not those who are dedicated to the breakup of this country. That's not the standard we're trying to achieve here. It's the average Quebec citizen, that they feel they can find some comfort in that, and I'm hoping that they can."

My party is particularly encouraged by the last sentence of the framework for discussion on Canadian unity. It indicates that the provinces and territories renew their commitment to work in partnership with the government of Canada to best serve the needs of Canadians. We renew our commitment to just that.

**Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma):** On behalf of my party, I want to indicate that we appreciate the statement of the Premier in the House today in response to the agreements reached in Calgary.

We agree with the Premier that as Canadians "we are returning to a time when choices are going to have to be made," and, "These choices should be made on the basis of the convictions and values of Ontarians and all Canadians."

Ontario has a special role to play. I think the Premier understands that historically the largest province in this country, with the largest population and a significant portion of the wealth of this vast nation, has in many ways ties that are closest among all of the provinces to the province of Quebec. We have a special role to play in dealing with the needs and concerns of that province and the Quebec people, while responding to the needs and concerns of Ontarians and all Canadians.

I welcome the statement by the Premier that we are prepared to move forward with this framework to act as a catalyst for dialogue, but I also would say that we have a significant leadership role to play in the process. I know the Premier understands the importance of all Canadians working together, understanding the needs and concerns of all citizens, but at the same time bringing those needs and concerns together in a way that can respond to the serious situation facing the nation, in a way that can make Ontario a leading province in ensuring that all Canadians — Quebecers and Canadians from all provinces — feel at home and understand that the Constitution reflects their needs and aspirations.

The Premier has said that the process for the framework will be announced in the near future. I note that the framework for discussion agreed to in Calgary states that all citizens must have the opportunity to participate. In Ontario, we hope and expect that this process will make it possible for citizens to have real and meaningful input into the process and that their concerns and aspirations will be reflected in the positions taken by the government of Ontario on their behalf.

In looking at the framework for discussion that was agreed to in Calgary by the premiers, it's important to recognize that while it has been described as a framework and a process, it does deal with very important, substantive issues. "All provinces, while diverse in their characteristics, have equality of status." As the Premier

indicated, it recognizes that the "the unique character of Quebec society, including its French-speaking majority, its culture and its tradition of civil law, is fundamental to the wellbeing fundamental to the wellbeing of Canada."

It also states, "Consequently, the Legislature and government of Quebec have a role to protect and develop the unique character of Quebec society within Canada."

It also states, "If any future constitutional amendment confers powers on one province, these powers must be available to all provinces."

These indeed are substantive statements of principle. They are not just statements of a framework for consultation. We obviously are into the position of dealing with significant principles and questions for debate in this country. We look forward, as members of the Legislature, to cooperating with the government and all members of the assembly in ensuring Ontarians' views are heard and are incorporated in the final process for working out the future of our great nation, a nation we all love and cherish.

1400

**M. Gilles Bisson (Cochrane-Sud) :** En tant que député du Nouveau Parti démocratique, j'aimerais répondre aux commentaires du premier ministre. Premièrement, je voudrais féliciter les premiers ministres qui ont assisté à ce congrès à Calgary sur les travaux qu'ils ont faits pour développer le dernier propos, qui est très important pour toute la nation. Deuxièmement, je dois rappeler au premier ministre et aux autres premiers ministres la leçon qu'on a apprise sous les autres tentatives de trouver des résolutions à notre problème constitutionnelle : que tous les chemins que l'on a pris quand ça vient à en trouver une solution ont été difficiles. Cela a pris beaucoup de bons efforts de la part de tous les partis des assemblées législatives, ici en Ontario comme dans les autres provinces et au fédéral, et cela va en prendre encore plus dans les mois à venir pour trouver une solution.

Je vous assure, en tant que députés du Nouveau Parti démocratique, que nous avons un intérêt réel quand ça vient à trouver un propos qui, à la fin de la journée, va répondre aux deux points qui sont très importants dans ces discussions : le premier, c'est que le Québec puisse se joindre à notre Constitution de manière à ce qu'eux pourront en revenir avec fierté en disant : «Nous, Québécois, nous voyons comme faisant partie de la famille canadienne et que notre place dans ce pays nous assure que la Constitution répond à nos besoins.» Deuxièmement, et cela représente les travaux des gouvernements, c'est de regarder la manière de laquelle tous les Canadiens pourront se regarder dans cette entente et dire, «Nous aussi hors Québec on se trouve comme étant Canadiens et nous pouvons nous voir nous-mêmes dans ce document constitutionnel.»

Je voudrais aussi dire au premier ministre que les consultations que vous allez commencer ont besoin d'être réelles. On comprend qu'il y a eu beaucoup d'ouvrage de fait jusqu'à date. Il y a eu des commissions, et il y en a qui vont commencer dans les prochains jours, qui ont regardé la question constitutionnelle ici en Ontario comme dans d'autres provinces. Je pense qu'on n'a pas besoin de tout

recommencer ; je pense qu'on a besoin de regarder ce qui a été fait jusqu'à cette date, et d'abord ce qui a été fait dans le passé dans ces consultations-là auprès du public auxquelles votre propre premier ministre a assisté dans le dernier parlement, et regarder comment on pourrait trouver un processus qui permettrait à chercher les informations dont on a besoin aujourd'hui pour donner une solution aux problèmes qu'on voit aujourd'hui et trouver une manière de mener ces débats constitutionnels et une fois pour toutes finir afin de pouvoir avancer avec les autres provinces, avec le Canada.

Le dernier point est que ces consultations sont très importantes pour la communauté francophone, parce que la francophonie de l'Ontario se trouve dans une situation un peu unique. On est non-Québécois, on est Canadiens, et on est Ontariens premièrement. Les solutions constitutionnelles envers la famille franco-ontarienne ont besoin de reconnaître ce fait. Je sais qu'avec l'ouvrage vous allez vous assurer comme premier ministre, comme les autres chefs de parti vont s'assurer, que la francophonie peut se retrouver dans ce document.

## STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

### OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

**Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Labour):** I'm pleased to provide members of this House with information about a province-wide campaign to eliminate and reduce the number of construction deaths and injuries due to falls on construction sites. With the Ontario construction industry booming and a resulting flood of inexperienced young workers into the system to take advantage of the new job opportunities, there has unfortunately been an increase in falls this year. These falls have killed six workers and critically injured 37 people in the first six months of this year.

As members know, our government has made a strong commitment to ensure that Ontario workplaces are among the safest in the world, and in order to make certain that we do everything possible to achieve this goal, we have the Focus on Falls campaign as the latest in a series of coordinated initiatives the government has undertaken to improve our health and safety system. Other changes have included improving workplace training, introducing a new young worker awareness program, providing the Workers' Compensation Board with a strong new mandate for prevention, and setting for the first time in the history of this province a goal of a 30% reduction in lost-time injuries by the year 2000.

Our ministry has also become more proactive in enforcing workplace standards by focusing on industry-specific enforcement campaigns aimed at targeting employers with poor health and safety records. Last year we increased our workplace inspections by 51% and targeted certain areas where we knew there to be problems. In

Windsor, for example, we did a blitz of industrial sites and as a result over 800 orders were issued. In the Ottawa area our campaign focused on ensuring that we eliminated forklift truck hazards.

However, there is more to be done. The six construction deaths that have occurred during the first half of this year as a result of falls were all entirely preventable. Sadly, not one of the victims was wearing fall restraint equipment, as required by the Occupational Health and Safety Act. So we are embarking on this campaign and our 80 construction safety inspectors will be focusing their attention on construction companies with poor performance records and small construction sites where home builders and roofing contractors are working.

Our message is simple: All workers, supervisors and employers must recognize that falls pose a serious life-threatening risk and that the fall restraint requirements contained in the act offer an effective means to avoid injury and death. Our safety awareness campaign over the next six weeks will enable us to share the message of the need to wear the fall restraint equipment. It will contribute to a further reduction in the needless deaths and injuries at Ontario construction sites.

1410

**Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre):** Any effort that goes forward to reduce accidents in any workplace of course is laudable and there is some meagre effort here on the part of the government to take some initiative. But I wonder, in the light of a smouldering time bomb in the province, why we'd get such an announcement here today. I thought perhaps the minister was going to announce that she was withdrawing the closure motion on Bill 136 for this afternoon, and then I find out that in fact the House leader for the government has called the motion to limit the time for people to debate the particular issues.

Relating back to the construction industry — I see the minister laughing; I don't think it's so funny — I hope your negotiations with the construction industry are fruitful and will really lead to some kind of support of that industry and some of the accidents they have.

I find it somewhat interesting that the minister talks about a new prevention mandate and that the ministry has set as a goal a 30% reduction in lost-time injuries. I will submit to you, having just gone through Bill 99, which was another time-allocated discussion that limited the opportunity to fully address the issues in the bill, that the statistics will probably go down, but they will go down because fewer people will qualify for certain workplace injuries. Now fewer legitimate injuries that are perceived to be there — and the medical field and the rehabilitation field acknowledge that people have been hurt in the workplace or diseased in the workplace or stressed in the workplace, whatever it is — will qualify for some of those, so this will help the government's statistics look very good.

As a matter of fact, with the time allocation, the Liberal caucus had an amendment to make it obligatory for the compensation board to have a health and safety advisory council. It would compel the board to do so. Of course it

wasn't supported by the government side, and there was no time left for any debate because we were limited in what we could talk about. So I find that somewhat incompatible.

The other thing is that if the government is truly interested in learning more about any cases of injuries on the job, as to how things could be prevented, then it seems to me that moving away from mandatory inquests isn't going to provide you with the very best and deepest insights as to what happened, what took place or how prevention truly can happen in the future.

I want to share some time with my colleague from Prescott and Russell, but I would say that if you are really interested in the workers, especially workers who are injured after the fact, there is some question in looking at Bill 99 as to what kind of prevention program is really there. There are a few little campaigns, but the real concern is that those who have a legitimate reason to have some temporary or permanent compensation, in fairness, with a sense of dignity, are supported with their families. Of course, as we know, it was a sad day that it did not happen.

**Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Prescott and Russell):** I can see that the minister has good intentions. We know that at the present time your goal is to reduce by 30% the number of injuries in Ontario. We know also that there's a lack of health and safety inspectors on construction sites. Apparently we only have approximately 68 inspectors in the whole of the province.

You know that especially in eastern Ontario, through the WCB office, we have received some data that we have paid over \$50 million of compensation to Quebec-address-based employees, all this because we don't have the inspectors in place. Do you intend to increase the number of health and safety inspectors? Without this, over 5,000 applications last year alone came from the construction industry, and out of those 5,000, the majority in eastern Ontario came from Quebec residents.

**Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre):** Let me begin by saying to the minister that your attempt today to divert what is really happening with regard to your continuing attack on labour is not going to work. The fact is that you try to paper things over with messages like we have today, and today's is "Fall Focus on Falls." Isn't that cute? Then you go on, and what's insulting about this — it goes from cute to insulting — is that you talk about the other things you have done. You talk about the Workers' Compensation Board. You've got a lot of nerve talking about workplace accident and illness prevention and mentioning the Workers' Compensation Board, given what you're doing to injured workers and the WCB. First of all, you're taking away the words "Workers" and "Compensation" from the name of the new agency. That's how much commitment you've got.

When you say in your statement today, "A strong new prevention mandate," give me a break. Everybody who is involved knows that's just a reflection of the mandate for the Occupational Disease Panel and the Workplace Health and Safety Agency that you killed. This new mandate is

really taking the mandate from there and putting it back in the WCB, from where it was taken out in the first place because it wasn't working. So this is a sham, much like a lot of what you're doing in terms of the public aspect of this government's agenda.

What's really important today in terms of workers and health and safety and labour relations in this province is the fact that you've moved a time allocation on your Bill 136 that's going to limit the amount of debate and limit the amount of public input to four days. What happened to your promise, your solemn promise? I quote your words from Hansard: "Yes, I commit to you that there will be full public hearings. We will travel the province." Your time allocation motion does not have the committee leaving Queen's Park, Minister. What does that say about your word? What does that say about what this government is really up to?

Let's just stand back for a second and take a look at what's going on here. At the same time that you're time limiting Bill 136 you're also time limiting Bill 152; that, of course, is the download. The download is the reason you're passing Bill 136, because you want all the cuts you're imposing on municipalities to be borne by the workers and their families and their standard of living. You did it all in secret. You dropped Bill 136 in here like it was a bomb. Then, when the Premier was forced to meet with labour leaders over the last few days, you've left the impression that you wanted to talk to labour, that you were seeking to find a way to stand down from this crisis point you had put us all on.

Labour accepted that, Minister. Labour accepted that in goodwill because you're a minister of the crown and they don't want a confrontation. So they've had a discussion with you and there have been other discussions taking place. What has your response been to their offer of finding a way out of this? Before those discussions are even concluded, you slam the door shut on any kind of debate on Bill 136, you time allocate it, time allocate it after you've already passed the most anti-democratic rule changes this House has ever seen in its entire history.

That wasn't good enough. It wasn't good enough that you can ram legislation through here in lightning speed and muzzle and handcuff the opposition. You dupe the labour movement into believing that you want to have sincere discussions, and while that's going on you drop a time allocation motion which goes against your word, shuts down any kind of public input and basically suggests that you and your Premier want a confrontation with labour.

You obviously have sought from the beginning to ensure that there was major labour confrontation in this province. Why else would you do what you're doing? It's unimaginable, in the context of the rule changes and what you've said you want to do about negotiations, that you would introduce a time allocation motion that goes against your own word in terms of any kind of province-wide travel and shuts down any opportunity for input. Minister, this is a sham. It's a disgrace. It's another example of your anti-worker agenda. We won't stand for it.

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** You must withdraw the remark you made, member for Lake Nipigon.

**Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon):** I will withdraw my remark, sir.

1420

## ORAL QUESTIONS

### PUBLIC SERVICE AND LABOUR RELATIONS REFORM

**Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre):** My question is to the Minister of Labour. I imagine these days you must be thinking of a pending cabinet shuffle.

On June 4 of this year I asked you in the Legislature whether you would commit to full public hearings on Bill 136, which guts fundamental labour rights in Ontario. I asked this because Bill 136 will affect about half a million people, if not more, throughout the province, people in Kenora and Sudbury, in Pembroke, in Hamilton, Windsor, Cornwall, Ottawa — everywhere, not just in this fair city. It will impact on the quality of services throughout the province, everything from education to health care, from snow removal to sewers and roads, police and firefighting services, nursing and libraries, and every other public service people depend on.

I want to quote your reply from Hansard when I asked you that question.

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Question, please.

**Mr Patten:** You said: "Yes, I commit to you that there will be full public hearings. We will travel the province, we will be in Toronto and we will listen." Why have you broken your promise to have —

**The Speaker:** Thank you very much.

**Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Labour):** It certainly is our wish to ensure that as the restructuring takes place, we are able to provide continuous service to all the stakeholders in this province.

As we deal with Bill 136, as you well know, there was an indication from members of the committee you are on that there was an interest in reaching people in different parts of this province through means of video conferencing. We are actively taking a look at how we can access parts of this province that have never before had an opportunity for input, and we're looking at how we can ensure that those individuals have an opportunity to provide some input on Bill 136.

**Mr Patten:** You'll notice that the minister didn't answer the question, unless she astro-travels. She said she would travel to other parts of the province, and she obviously doesn't intend to do that. Maybe she will look at video conferencing; I don't know.

Minister, though everyone has been telling you that you haven't been listening, you say you are and that you care. Everyone is telling you to slow down. The Premier was ready to meet and talk with everybody at one point, I guess when he was reading the newspapers. He told the

AMO conference that he would move slowly on Bill 136 and that of course he would listen and consult.

This legislation is going to be rammed through. We start the process this afternoon with a time allocation motion. We are going to have some very violent reactions, I believe, out in the community.

Why are you shutting down the consultation process and handicapping the committee from fully doing its job, which it will not be able to do under the time allocation motion and the limitations you've imposed on it?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** First of all, the member may not be aware, because perhaps he was not in committee, that the option of teleconferencing was discussed and there was interest expressed within the committee. I understand that you were not always there.

What we are endeavouring to do is to tap into the new technology, which is obviously being used by people throughout this province, and to communicate and provide an opportunity for communication with those individuals.

By the way, we are not shutting down consultation. As you know, last week we met with the OFL. We have been meeting with the police association. We will continue to dialogue not only with the OFL and the police, but we will now embark on public consultations with all the stakeholders, and we'll do that through the days of hearings.

**Mr Patten:** I hope the press have a chance this afternoon to listen to the debate on the closure motion for Bill 136 and the arguments that are used by the government. It's appalling. You have so-called four days: You'll have hearings on a Friday morning and you'll have hearings on a Friday afternoon; and then you expect amendments to be in, in legalese, on Monday morning at 10 o'clock, to begin clause-by-clause the same day, on that Monday afternoon.

Do you think that's democracy? It's a bloody farce. It's a sham and it's hypocritical. Why are you doing that?

**The Speaker:** "Hypocritical" is out of order. I ask you to withdraw that.

**Mr Patten:** "Hypocritical" is out of order? I withdraw.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Perhaps the member does not remember that this legislation was introduced in June. We have had consultations since that time. In fact, I had written a letter to the OFL back in July indicating our interest in meeting with them. We've now had the opportunity to take a look at all the changes they have suggested. We've had an opportunity to listen to the hospital association and we've had an opportunity to listen to the municipalities.

I think we do have a good idea now of what the concerns are. It's obviously time for us to move into the broader sector and to have four days of public hearings. As you well know —

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Member for Kingston and The Islands, I warn you to come to order. Hamilton Centre as well.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** If you take a look at the social contract which was imposed by the NDP, which actually did override collective agreements and determine outcomes, that was all passed without one day of debate and there weren't public hearings.

We have already had three and a half months of discussion on this piece of legislation, and we're anxious to hear from the public.

### HEALTH CARE

**Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich):** My question is for the Premier. The week of April 18, you and I had a meeting scheduled to discuss Windsor's health care crisis, especially since yet another emergency centre was closing April 18. You cancelled that meeting.

Your Minister of Health has cut \$28 million from our hospitals, and they have spent \$6 million on restructuring which they have never had reimbursed. You were told we would be in crisis if you didn't intervene to provide funding, which was promised two years ago but never flowed.

Now a ministry confidential report itemizes the dangers that exist in Windsor: "physical emergency units are hopelessly inadequate, inefficient and unsafe...a lack of privacy, confidentiality and human dignity." We have bed shortages, staff shortages and not enough stretchers. We don't even have enough bays for ambulances to pull up and unload patients.

Will you finally intervene and provide immediate funding relief?

**Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier):** I know the Minister of Health would like to answer.

**Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health):** I don't know what the honourable member is getting at today. There was a press conference earlier this week in which representatives of the two Windsor hospitals and the DHC indicated they were pleased with progress being made with respect to hospital restructuring and that they are looking forward to the report of the commission, whenever the commission makes its interim and final reports.

**Mrs Pupatello:** Minister or Premier, someone over there has to listen finally. The ministry knows full well that the people who made a conference yesterday in Windsor said they could not make even stopgap changes without funding from you. They are calling on \$3.1 million that must flow immediately.

You've made announcements and reannouncements for the Windsor area and not one red cent has ever landed in our community. Your own 84-page damning report actually tells you of the dangers that exist today. Moreover, you sat on the report since the beginning of August and did absolutely nothing, and you knew this was coming. The most frustrating part is that it was completely avoidable and you did nothing to avoid the crisis.

All communities are watching your treatment of Windsor today. You called it the cradle of restructuring, and now you are destroying it. No more announcements, no more reannouncements. Minister, you must have that flow today.

**Hon Mr Wilson:** It was I, in conjunction with the hospitals and the DHC, who launched the report the honourable member is talking about. We asked Dr Dagnone and Nurse McGillis, two of the leading experts in emergency services in the country and indeed our top

experts in Ontario — we paid for them to go to Windsor to look at everything that's going on. They have made 10 recommendations. One recommendation pertains to the Ministry of Health, and it's one we're already working on. The other nine pertain to all of us: the hospitals, the DHC and the ministry. We're working cooperatively.

The honourable member should be in better touch with her community because at the press conference this week in Windsor —

**Mrs Pupatello:** You knew what was going to happen, Minister, and you let it happen.

1430

**Hon Mr Wilson:** I don't expect one of the most partisan members to ever, ever be in this Legislature to take my word for it. Perhaps she will take the word of the doctors in Windsor. Dr Ng and Dr Chalmers, who represented the hospitals at the press conference, both indicated that patients were receiving quality care at the facilities and that patient safety is not in jeopardy.

**Mrs Pupatello:** This is your report, Minister. You had this report —

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** The member for Windsor-Sandwich, I won't warn you again to come to order.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Thank you for your help.

**Hon Mr Wilson:** The hospitals indicated that last week's meeting with the ministry was positive and the Ministry of Health has been in daily contact with the hospitals to ensure that patient care is not being compromised.

Finally, I'll say with respect to dollars that the press conference made it clear that everyone's waiting for the directions from the HSRC, the Health Services Restructuring Commission. Finally, I've said —

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker:** I'm not going to warn the member for Windsor-Sandwich again. Come to order.

**Hon Mr Wilson:** Finally, I've said quite often with respect to this matter that because we're in daily contact with the hospitals, we're working in a positive direction with the hospitals to serve more patients in modern hospitals and we look forward to making more reinvestments in the area to help patients. That's what we're all about on this side.

**The Speaker:** Final supplementary.

**Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South):** Minister, this report contradicts everything you've just said. It says that the care there is unacceptable, that it doesn't meet minimum standards, that it's inadequate and unsafe. We know what you did in Peterborough: You didn't respond. Two weeks ago a 74-year-old spent three days in an emergency room using a bedpan in full public view in Jim Wilson and Mike Harris's hospital system.

You're on view here, Minister. Ottawa wants to know, when you merge hospitals there, are you going to provide the resources? What are you going to do for Northwestern on November 3 when you merge hospitals and no new facilities have been built? This is you cutting from these

hospitals, taking the staff away, restructuring them, putting them together and then walking away from the problem.

If you have any dignity, you'll stand up in this House and you'll admit the \$28 million you cut from Windsor is hurting the patients there. You've got a track record of putting the patients last. Tell us today that you're going to put the money back into Windsor and you're going to review the emergency room cuts you've made all over the province. Let's hear that from you right now.

**Hon Mr Wilson:** Perhaps it would be helpful, since the member mentioned Northwestern, that I quote from a September 12 letter from the administrator of the hospital in the honourable member's own riding, Darlene Barnes. Ms Barnes says the following, "While it is our philosophy to be open to the community and to you" — writing to Mr Kennedy — "as a leader in our community, your actions to date, unfortunately, demonstrate that you are not coming to us with an open mind seeking the facts."

Ms Barnes, the CEO of the member's own hospital, goes on to say, "While there are many issues and challenges in merging organizations and consolidating services which impact on our patients, staff and members of the community, you seem most interested in generating fear within the community around the safety and quality of care provided to individuals regardless of whether or not the facts support this conclusion."

I suggest you examine your own conscience before you give any lectures to the government.

#### PUBLIC SERVICE AND LABOUR RELATIONS REFORM

**Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre):** My question is to the Minister of Labour. Minister, I think most of us who are involved in watching your continuing attack on the labour movement, on working people and their quality of life, are left almost speechless by the current action of last night and today. It's absolutely mind-boggling to believe the process that you've followed through here.

First of all, you changed the rules of this House into the most undemocratic system we've ever seen so that you can ram through legislation at lightning speed. Then you introduced Bill 136, which of course was the first bill, coincidentally, that had to play under your new rules. Then, when we wanted you to meet with the labour movement around 136, your Premier tried to suggest it was the labour leaders who didn't want to meet, it was they who didn't want to sit down and talk, it was they who were refusing, when all the while it was you. When there finally were discussions and you said you wanted to listen, what was your response? A time allocation that shuts down debate, shuts down any opportunity and leaves the labour movement —

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Thank you.

**Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Labour):** It's obvious that the member opposite is quite out of touch as to what's happening in Ontario as far as the quality of life

is concerned for working people. If we take a look at what's happening, we're seeing that consumer confidence has been restored; we're seeing that retail sales are up 5%; there's a real boom in the housing market; car sales are increasing; we've seen 33,000 new jobs created in the month of August; and there is a prediction of better news in the years ahead. Certainly the quality of life for all working people in this province is improving and it is a result of the changes that we are making in the life of Ontario.

**Mr Christopherson:** This is bizarre. You stand up and talk about how you're making things better at the same time as you're shutting down fundamental democracy in this province. That's what you're doing. Don't give us all this pabulum about how you're making things better. The reality is you're shutting down debate on Bill 136. You want a confrontation. One lousy week of public hearings in Toronto only, they end on Friday, and Monday morning we have to put in amendments and then we start debating those amendments.

Minister, I want to ask you very directly — I've got to get focused and get a question, because this is just beyond belief —

*Interjections.*

1440

**The Speaker:** Stop the clock. Member for Hamilton Centre.

**Mr Christopherson:** Minister, I want to ask you a very simple question. You made a commitment, you said: "Yes, I commit to you that there will be full public hearings. We will travel the province." What good is your word when you make that commitment and do the opposite? Will you bring back integrity, whatever you can, to your reputation and honour the commitment you made to travel this province on Bill 136?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** I would say, let's get focused and let's focus on the social contract. I find it unbelievable that you, a member of the NDP government that introduced the social contract, which overrode collective agreements and determined outcomes and had not one day of public hearings and was passed in less than three weeks, have the gall to stand up and talk about democracy.

In fact, do you know what you said when you were picketed by civil servants outside of your office? You said, "As difficult as it is for us to go through these times, we are convinced it is the right course of action, and if we don't take the steps we are, things will be worse for all the people in the public sector." That's what you said when you ignored the calls for any public hearings and you rushed the bill through in about three weeks.

**Mr Christopherson:** I think that everything you've done to working people and their families and our community proves that what I said was right. Things are a lot worse as a result of your agenda and what you're doing to our communities.

There's outrage across this province. Don't you realize what breaking your word is going to do in terms of labour relations out there? You said that you were going to listen, you said that you wanted to have honest dialogue with the

labour movement, you said that you were interested in making changes, and then you drop a time allocation motion that limits debate and gives us only a few days here in the province, in direct contravention of your commitment.

You promised to travel the province and listen to people. Why are you breaking your word to the people of this province and when are you going to show some integrity?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** I would like to indicate to the member opposite that we have certainly listened to people. In fact we have spent the last seven years listening to people. As far as the consultation on this legislation is concerned, we have been listening since the middle of June, and in the letter I sent yesterday to Gord Wilson, which I copied to the OHA and AMO, I indicated that we will continue with consultations.

We feel very confident that, as we move into the public phase of discussion with all of our stakeholders, at the end of the day we will be able to introduce amendments to the legislation that will reflect the concerns that have been expressed.

I would just mention again, we are looking at the option of the teleconferencing. As I say, it gives us an opportunity to reach some of the communities in this province that traditionally have never, ever had an opportunity to provide any input on any legislation.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** I see the member for Riverdale is heckling from the wrong seat. Member for Riverdale, you must go back. Thank you for pointing that out. I appreciate it.

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker:** That's your choice.

Funnily enough, there goes the member for Durham East in the wrong seat heckling. I would ask that he go back to his original seat. Thank you.

## MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

**Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York):** I want to move from the twilight zone —

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** If you've got a question, you've got to tell me whom it's to, member for Fort York. I just need to know right off the top of your question, that's all.

**Mr Marchese:** I want to go to a less provocative minister, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, for a question.

Yesterday you tabled a time allocation motion on Bill 152, a bill that will download, from Owen Sound to Hamilton to Sudbury and Toronto, \$1.2 billion in costs to the municipal taxpayers. Yet, in spite of the enormity of this bill, you have the gall to restrict the public to only five days of hearings on your mega-load, this on top of your rule changes that allow you to speed your bill through this House with very little debate.

Minister, do you really think no one cares about your download or do you believe, or are you hoping, they will blame the \$1.2 billion on the municipalities?

**Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing):** I guess the member is in the twilight zone, because that is not my bill. It's the bill of the social services minister, and I'd ask her to take it.

**The Speaker:** You see, you can't say anything. You just have to refer it. That constitutes an answer. You've got to answer it.

**Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon):** They're all talking at once.

**The Speaker:** Member for Lake Nipigon, I'm not debating with you right now. Come to order. Thank you. I appreciate your help, but it's really not helpful.

Minister, you simply refer it. If you start answering or make any reference to the question, then you've got to answer it.

**Hon Mr Leach:** I say to the honourable member and to you, Mr Speaker, that was my answer.

**Mr Marchese:** I appreciate the talents of this minister and I will go on with my supplementary.

Today the mayors of the province's largest cities met in Markham. They are trying to deal with your download but they still don't know and haven't been given the full breakdown of the costs. Bill 152 had just one message: The municipality will pay, and you as a minister and as the government are going to tell them how much. There's almost nothing about who will run the services, almost nothing about provincial standards, not even any certainty about which level of municipal government will pay the bill.

Minister, the list of questions grows and grows, the dump on the municipalities grows and grows and your credibility continues to shrink and shrink every day. Will you withdraw Bill 152 until you and some of your buddies get your act together?

**Hon Mr Leach:** I'll refer the question to the author of the bill.

**Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services):** I don't think there is any reason to withdraw this piece of legislation. As the member across way is well aware, we had made policy announcements in January in terms of how we thought we should be making an equitable transfer of these services. The municipalities brought forward better proposals. We consulted with them. We made further announcements in the spring. What this legislation is doing is simply implementing the policy framework for those announcements that we have spent many months consulting on.

The issue about provincial standards: Of course there are going to be provincial standards for these programs. They're extremely important. For example, one of the reasons I'm bringing in the welfare legislation is so there will indeed be those provincial standards.

I have full faith in municipalities that they're going to be able to work with us to deliver these services. As a matter of fact, in my municipality in Ajax just last night I attended a special celebration. They are the first community in North America to have an ISO 9001 quality designation — the first municipal government. I think that says

something about the commitment of the municipal level of government to good services for the taxpayer.

1450

**Mr Marchese:** Perhaps you can assist mon ami, M. Leach, with the following supplementary, and that is, the treasurer of Metropolitan Toronto, Louise Eason, says the download will cost the new megacity a minimum of \$260 million. In Owen Sound, a good Tory town, they predict a tax increase of up to 26%. In the north, the numbers are really scary. It's an average download of almost \$1,000 per household. Bill 152 dumps over \$1.2 billion, without giving the answers people need on ambulance services, public health, non-profit housing and many other areas. If you won't withdraw this bill, this embarrassingly inadequate bill, will you at least add a second week of public hearings so that people can adequately be heard?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** As I said, we have consulted with municipal representatives for many months over this legislation and in terms of the implementation. That's one of the reasons we have two implementation teams: one that's doing the social and community services; the other one that is doing the other issues. They have been working very hard and will continue to do so, I'm sure.

The other thing I would like to remind the honourable member — I mean, they keep talking about services going down. They forget to remind the critics out there that the province is assuming \$2.5 billion of education costs, a growing cost.

I would also like to remind the honourable members that one of the services that municipalities are cost-sharing with the province is welfare — 218,000 fewer people, a billion dollars in savings there. So they are having costs that are controllable, costs that are going down, and this will be I think a very equitable transfer.

#### IPPERWASH PROVINCIAL PARK

**Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt):** My question is to the Premier and it has to do with Ipperwash. It's been two years, Premier, since the death of Dudley George. We've been asking you over that period of time to at least commit to holding a public inquiry. We understand that you may have your reasons for setting the date for that, for not beginning it immediately, but what we need is a commitment to hold that public inquiry. The Premier I think appreciates that there are serious, major questions about what happened at Ipperwash that clearly need answers. So my question is this: Will you commit to the House today — commit — to a public inquiry at a date that you determine?

**Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier):** We've been quite clear that when legal matters are settled we will look at what we believe is still appropriate or necessary to meet our commitment to make sure all the facts are heard.

**Mr Phillips:** I think the public understands why increasingly we believe there are major implications for the government, that the government is going to refuse to have a public inquiry so we'll find out. I think the public can understand your saying that there are legal reasons why

you can't begin a public inquiry. But the public can't understand why you will not commit to a public inquiry. We have the Lambton county council demanding it, the B'nai Brith, the United Church of Canada, the Anglican Church of Canada, the Catholic church, the Mennonite community, the Lutheran church, many editorial boards — all demanding that you commit to a public inquiry.

I again say to you, Premier, will you now reconsider, will you at least begin to clear the air about Ipperwash by today saying the government of Ontario will commit to a public inquiry at the earliest possible date that we can do so legally? Will you make that simple, single and most important commitment to the people of Ontario today?

**Hon Mr Harris:** I'm pleased to repeat the commitment to the people of Ontario that we are prepared, as soon as all court cases are settled, to make all the information that we can available, which I am quite sure will satisfy all concerned who are objective on this matter that we have acted, just as previous governments have acted, in an appropriate manner.

#### POLICE SERVICES

**Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold):** My question is to the Solicitor General. Solicitor General, you know that on January 1 a number of Ontario municipalities are going to be required to take over the full cost of policing. In Haldimand-Norfolk, like many other municipalities, the regional council is faced with the decision to either expand its own police force or to contract out all of its policing to the Ontario Provincial Police. This has started campaigning the likes of which has never been seen before. Reports from Haldimand-Norfolk are of police officers going door to door, of OPP committees mailing pamphlets with misleading information about the Haldimand-Norfolk force, of the OPP using overhead advertising at fall fairs, of threats to local politicians and of officials from both the OPP and regional forces issuing statements attacking one another.

Is this what you had in mind, police forces fighting it out, playing politics to scoop a municipality to give them the contract? Is this what you had in mind when you dreamed up the download scheme this really consists of?

**Hon Robert W. Runciman (Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services):** Those are serious allegations. I would suggest, if a municipality has those concerns and the facts to back them up, to make us aware of them and we will ensure that an appropriate investigation takes place.

With respect to the cost exchanges and the policing amendments, I think this is giving each municipality the opportunity to explore a variety of options. I think that's quite fair. The member raises some concerns surrounding that process, and I would share those concerns that he has conveyed here today if indeed they're accurate. But I can say that the municipality or municipalities involved have certainly not contacted me to express those concerns.

**Mr Kormos:** Solicitor General, I have been contacted, as have a number of my colleagues. Haldimand-Norfolk

regional council is meeting to make their decision tomorrow night, and it won't be an isolated regional municipality; other municipalities are going to be required to make the same decisions in short order. Many in Haldimand-Norfolk feel that they're being forced effectively to buy a pig in a poke when it comes to the OPP services. Some suspect that they're the victims of a bait and switch scheme whereby the OPP is low-balling the price and, in the process, acquiring a monopoly of policing over that municipality. There's no guarantee that if they go with the OPP, they're going to get the same level of service next year and the year after that and the year after that. There's no guarantee that the contract price is going to remain the same. There's no guarantee that they're not going to end up subsidizing the OPP policing of Highway 401 here in Toronto.

Will you please direct that consideration of the competing bids be suspended until you and your ministry have had an opportunity to investigate these allegations and to ensure that the contract and bidding process is fair, transparent and on a level playing field?

**Hon Mr Runciman:** I reject those allegations categorically. With respect to accurate costings, we've spent considerable time ensuring that OPP costing figures are reflective of actual on-the-ground costs.

I want to say with respect to contracts, the OPP, through the negotiation process, will determine, along with the municipality, the levels of service they will be billed for. Traditionally, the contracts entered into with the OPP are five-year contracts.

I think the concerns the member is raising here do not stand up to scrutiny. In fact, we have done everything possible to ensure that all of these competitions are on a level playing field. We've bent over backwards to ensure that's the case.

1500

## SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

**Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Simcoe Centre):** My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. Many of my constituents telephone me to discuss the changes to our welfare system, in particular workfare. I know the government promised to reduce welfare rolls and get more people back to work. I think my constituents deserve to know how this plan is working at the local level. Can the minister tell me what these changes mean for my riding of Simcoe Centre and what impact they've had on taxpayers?

**Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services):** I'm very pleased that the city of Barrie, for example, is experiencing the same decrease in the number of people on welfare that we've seen province-wide: a 16% reduction in the number of people trapped on welfare province-wide, and in Barrie that is a 23% reduction, some 2,000 fewer cases. In just this last fiscal year that has resulted in \$743,000 worth of savings to the taxpayers in that community.

We know this is due to the economic growth, the job growth in this province. We've seen almost a quarter of a million net new jobs in the last two years. We also know that these decreases are due to our welfare reforms, including Ontario Works, our work-for-welfare program. Barrie is one of the 42 communities that have it up and running and we're very pleased with that progress.

**Mr Tascona:** It is encouraging that the welfare rolls are smaller than they were two years ago.

A recent survey in the Toronto Star reports that most people in the GTA believe in sharing welfare costs. Most of my constituents are also committed to helping those who are less fortunate. At the same time, many of them tell me they deserve to know that their money is being spent wisely.

I'd appreciate the minister telling me what type of feedback she has been receiving about the Ontario Works program.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Not only are the numbers very encouraging in terms of our progress to date, but the anecdotal evidence, if you will, as well, not only from people who are involved in delivering the program but from those who are actually on the program. For example, we had a news story from Barrie recently where the program manager said that the work-for-welfare program is so popular that single moms, who aren't forced to join, are taking part anyway.

We have another quote that says, "There was some anticipation within the community that some people would not want to participate, but we probably have a 99% rate of people who want to."

We also have a recent letter from the Brantford Expositor from a participating woman who says — and this is someone who is in the program — "Ontario Works is a sincere and very admirable effort to get Ontarians back into the workforce and off the system." She talks about the services it provides: workshops on how to write résumés, that it helps people discover abilities, boosts self-confidence —

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Answer, please.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** She says, "This is a serious attempt to move people into meaningful jobs," and "The Harris government has produced results." We're collecting a lot of anecdotal stories.

## EDUCATION FINANCING

**Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury):** My question is to the Premier. You will know that yesterday at West Ferris Secondary School in your riding, 300 students staged a rally against the looming increase in cuts to education. This was a well-organized, highly-thought-out protest. The students who protested weren't the rabble-rousers or troublemakers of the school. These organizers and these students were highly motivated, very talented young OAC adults who are genuinely concerned about their future and the future of education in Ontario.

Naomi Cheechoo, one of the organizers for the demonstration, is reported to have said that this protest is "by the

students, for the students, in support of our teachers." Co-organizer Erin Hayes said: "You think you're crowded now. Imagine classes of as many as 45 to 50 students."

Premier, these students truly care. Will you listen to your constituents such as Naomi and Erin and rein in the Minister of Education —

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Thank you.

**Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier):** I certainly will. Let me tell you I agree with the students. I think any increase in class size over the last period of time has been absolutely wrong, unnecessary, inexcusable and unacceptable to me and to the Minister of Education and to this government.

I want to assure the students that that is precisely why we are moving to work far more cooperatively with the teachers, classroom teachers particularly, to ensure that no actions are taken in the future that would do anything but increase the quality of education, control class sizes and control decisions to take away from quality. We'll move this province of Ontario, and particularly West Ferris Secondary School, my alma mater in the city of North Bay, back to the top of the pack, the top of Canada, the top of the world. Those are the changes and that's the commitment, and I agree with them.

**Mr Bartolucci:** If you agree with them, you'll stop the cuts to education. That's why they were protesting. Stop the cuts to education. Even one of your young Tory supporters, Peter Loewen, a self-described Conservative Party supporter who took part in the demonstration, said he's concerned and he wants to see the government work with the teachers.

These students felt they had to do something dramatic, they felt they had to do something they didn't want to do: They had to walk out of class. Teachers feel they're going to have to do something they don't want to do. Parents are caught. They want to support the students and the teachers, because they think you're going too far too fast, with too many cuts, without understanding the impact of your cuts.

Again, will you listen to your constituents? Will you listen to your own supporters? Will you listen to the parents, the students and the teachers of Ontario? Will you direct your Minister of Education to slow down his agenda and to stop the cuts to education?

**Hon Mr Harris:** Listen, I have said yes, I agree with the students. They said they were concerned, for example, about outdated computers, products of a \$14-billion system that had proved itself incapable of focusing on the classroom and raising student achievement. I agree with them.

When we look, between 1995 and 1996 enrolment declined 2.9% in Nipissing and funding from the province declined 2.6%, so they had more money per pupil than they ever had before, yet we were not getting those dollars into the classroom.

You mentioned Peter Loewen. I am quoting now from the Nugget: "Peter Loewen said the Tory government has good intentions." If the teachers have good intentions,

we'll work together to have the best education system, not the mess we inherited from the ilk of your party.

## ROAD CONSTRUCTION

**Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East):** I have a question to the Premier. Your government has had a bad time in court over the last two weeks: First your government was found guilty of violating the Charter of Rights when you repealed proxy pay equity. Then your government was found to be acting unfairly when you tried to block the appointment of an independent adjudicator to deal with contempt charges against the government House leader. Then last Thursday the Minister of Natural Resources was convicted of allowing an illegal road to be built on crown land into Cross Lake in Temagami.

Your minister has failed to understand the seriousness of this issue. He said in the House on February 17, "As far as the EA for the road goes, it's a minor process." The Ministry of Environment and Energy didn't think so when it laid the charges and the court didn't think so when it convicted the ministry. My question to you is, how do you propose to deal with a minister who doesn't seem to understand the seriousness of allowing his ministry to break the law?

**Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier):** I intend to refer the question to the minister.

**Hon Chris Hodgson (Minister of Natural Resources, Northern Development and Mines):** I'm glad to answer this question again in this House, to remind the people of Ontario of the issue. As the papers reported at the time, it was the Ministry of Natural Resources that realized the process hadn't been followed and phoned the Minister of Environment. That was clearly quoted by all the Toronto papers at the time.

The issue is around a road that existed, and after a number of years of study by the comprehensive planning commission, they decided they would like to see the road blocked at the top of the hill instead of going down to the water. When I received that recommendation, I felt that was unfair to the elderly people and the disabled people who wouldn't be able to access the lake as they had in the past and that therefore our staff should go through the proper environmental assessment process to determine if any damage was done.

What happened in the court was that we pleaded guilty to the charge, but it was recognized that there was absolutely no environmental damage or degradation to that area.

**Ms Martel:** I'm sorry the Premier didn't want to answer how he's going to deal with the conduct of this minister. It was this minister who stood in the House on February 17 and said the EA process was a minor matter; breaking the EA law was a minor matter. You obviously don't understand what's happened. You've shown contempt for the law. You've shown contempt for the local residents, because the comprehensive planning council recommended last June that there be no motorized access into Cross Lake. They recommended that because they

were concerned there would be too much angling and fishing on Cross Lake and they wanted to protect this lake. That's why they made the recommendation.

Minister, your road is opposed by the comprehensive planning council, by the Temagami first nation, by the town of Temagami and by the Temagami Lakes Association. They have all said the road should go. Will you finally do the right thing, listen to the local people and say that a road will not be built into Cross Lake? Will you do that?

**Hon Mr Hodgson:** I'm glad the member of the third party allowed me the opportunity to clarify my position. The Environmental Assessment Act is not minor. This proposed extension of a road from the top of the hill at the parking lot down the hill to the lake was a minor project which still needed to go through the proper process.

1510

### ALZHEIMER DISEASE

**Mr Jim Brown (Scarborough West):** My question is directed to the minister responsible for seniors. Today across Canada, local Alzheimer societies are hosting coffee breaks. These breaks are to raise both money and awareness of a disease that can strike any adult, but particularly those over the age of 65.

With between 80,000 and 100,000 Ontarians suffering from this disease, can the minister tell the House what the government is doing to help persons with Alzheimer's and their families?

**Hon Cameron Jackson (Minister without Portfolio [Seniors Issues]):** I want to thank the member for the question and to advise all members of the House that, with World Alzheimer's Day coming up this weekend and with the announcements all across this province of expanded programs to assist in this program, this government has taken a very clear and decisive stand in expanding dollars for the fact that Alzheimer's is a growing disease and is going to affect an aging and ever-longer-living population in this province.

Aside from the \$100 million we recently committed to long-term-care facilities, I want members to know that 45% of all the residents in our facilities have some form of dementia, and therefore we had to expand those dollars, but the community-based dollars is also where this government is expanding. Right here in the city of Toronto, we've increased by \$14.3 million in additional dollars caregiver support services and badly needed respite services.

Unfortunately, not every government in Canada is as enthusiastic. I know all members read in the *Globe and Mail* on Saturday that the federal Liberal budget and campaign promise of more home care dollars, to quote Minister Rock, was "tentative, preliminary and non-committal." That's not the level of commitment we're getting in Ontario from this government.

**Mr Jim Brown:** My supplementary is also addressed to the minister responsible for seniors. Will the new community care access centres, one of which will be in my

riding, make life easier not only for those who suffer from Alzheimer's but also for those family members who take care of them?

**Hon Mr Jackson:** There is no question that the new community care access centres will be helpful in providing one-window access, coordinating community-based support programs. I'm pleased to report to members of the House that on Monday of this week, the six CCACs were opened and are in full operation within Metro Toronto. I'm pleased to indicate, having made the transfer of these responsibilities, that they are increasing their programs, \$1.3 million in the budgets for adult day services and more than \$800,000 for respite care, bringing our total to almost \$9 million.

In Ontario, we are reinvesting our health care dollars into priority services for seniors, a patient-focused program. The Mike Harris government is very proud of the fact that we've increased by 40% the budgets for community-based long-term care in Metro Toronto since we formed the government. That's a 40% increase in funding.

### POLICE SERVICES

**Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming):** I have a question for the Solicitor General. From the mishandling of young offenders and the privatization of fire departments and the continuing disaster up at the boot camp, I want to ask you today about a disturbing trend we now have in policing.

We're seeing more stories of inadequate police response to citizens' cries and calls for help. Last week, an 84-year-old woman in St Catharines waited three hours in her car for police to respond to the accident scene. The Niagara Region Police Association reports that this happened because of inadequate staffing.

On another front, housing developments such as Foxwood Creek in Burlington are now marketing their communities on the fact that they have a gate and a wall around their community to provide extra security. Obviously, the downloading and cuts are having an effect on police services in Ontario.

Minister, what is happening to police protection on your watch in Ontario?

**Hon Robert W. Runciman (Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services):** It's quite clear that public safety has improved in this province in the brief period of time we've been in office.

I can give you a couple of examples. The parole board is an example. When we took office, the parole board was releasing into the community on the average of 62%, 63% under Liberal and NDP tenure. It seemed to the public that they were focusing their energies, their cares and their concerns on offenders, not victims, not the public at large.

We've changed that process completely. We've made community safety the number one priority of the Ontario Board of Parole. The last statistics I saw were release rates of around 37%. I'll compare our record with respect to public safety against theirs any day.

**Mr Ramsay:** Over the last two years you have cut \$3 million out of community policing and prevention. We're

now starting to see the development of a two-tier system of policing in this province.

The town of Dundas has recently made the decision to hire a private firm to provide additional security for the town. This came about when the business improvement association reported a 50% increase in break-ins in the downtown district and a lack of police response to those calls.

Minister, I don't believe safety should be for sale. As you continue to cut the core services, only the more affluent individuals and communities are going to be able to afford adequate policing in this province. Do you support one level of policing for the poor and a better level of safety for the rich?

**Hon Mr Runciman:** I have respect for the member opposite, but he is making suggestions today which I would hope he knows are totally inaccurate. He knows that municipal police forces are funded through the municipal tax base. The policing force that this province, this government is responsible for is the OPP.

I want to give you another statistic with respect to coverage and commitment to policing this province. When we assumed office in 1995, the 24-hour coverage across this province with respect to OPP service was around 32%. Communities were receiving 24-hour coverage. The latest statistic on that: Over 80% of Ontario is now receiving 24-hour coverage. That's a dramatic change in a little over two years.

We're also committed to spending an additional \$25 million on the DNA lab to improve DNA lab operations. We've established a proceeds-of-crime unit. We've brought into this House the Community Safety Act, which is going to allow communities to identify —

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Thank you. The Solicitor General, come to order.

1520

### FIRE IN HAMILTON

**Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre):** My question is to the Minister of Environment and Energy. For weeks and weeks now, our community has been calling upon you to hold a public inquiry into the Plastimet fire. We now have a number of other community councils, local councils, that have come on side because they're worried it may happen in their communities and they want answers, and every time you have said no because there have been no specific questions.

Minister, let me ask you one: A staffer in my office has talked with an official of Environment Canada, who has told her that the federal government had special equipment on the road, on the way to the Plastimet fire while it was burning, and your ministry said to them, and I quote, "They have it under control," and that equipment was sent back. My question to you is, is this true and, if it is, why did you send back the federal help that was offered?

**Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Environment and Energy):** The determination of my ministry was, as I

understand it and as I can remember, that they were in control, they had all the necessary test equipment there —

**Mr Christopherson:** Oh, yes, really under control.

**Hon Mr Sterling:** — and that the federal government wanted to charge us a very pretty penny for supplying additional equipment —

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Order. Members of the third party, you must allow the minister to answer the question.

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker:** Member for Cochrane North, I'm warning you to come to order now.

**Hon Mr Sterling:** As I said before, my ministry was there within an hour, an hour and a half, providing test results to the medical officer of health, to the fire department, to make decisions as to what they might or might not do. The determination —

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker:** Member for Cochrane North, I don't want to have to warn you again.

**Hon Mr Sterling:** Not only did we have adequate technical knowledge there, scientists, but we had a technical van there within two hours. The equipment which we were going to get from the federal government would have been much less timely in getting to the site than our own equipment, so it became not an imperative for them to be coming with their equipment.

## PETITIONS

### VEHICLE REGISTRATION FEES

**Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury):** This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and it coincides with the postcard campaign across the north.

"Whereas the new Mike Harris northern vehicle registration tax does not recognize the uniqueness of the north; and

"Whereas Mike Harris should know that gas prices are higher in northern Ontario; and

"Whereas the new Mike Harris northern vehicle registration tax is blatantly unfair to the north; and

"Whereas we have no voice for the north, fighting for northerners around the cabinet table;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to revoke the new tax imposed on the north and convince the Tory government to understand that indeed northern Ontario residents do not want the new Mike Harris vehicle registration tax."

Of course I affix my signature to this petition.

### HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

**Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre):** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Health Services Restructuring Commission has issued directions calling for the closure of the Wellesley Central Hospital; and

"Whereas the Wellesley Central Hospital has played an integral role in the health care needs of the people in Toronto's downtown core; and

"Whereas the Wellesley Central Hospital has become well known for its focus on urban health, minimally invasive surgery and expertise with diseases of the immune system; and

"Whereas the Wellesley Central Hospital's busy emergency department sees 33,000 visits per year; and

"Whereas the Wellesley Central Hospital is Ontario's premier HIV/AIDS hospital and is located in an area populated with a high number of people affected by this illness,

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario to stand by its responsibilities for hospitals in the province and to overturn the directions of the Health Services Restructuring Commission, thereby allowing the Wellesley Central Hospital to continue to serve its communities with excellence."

I agree with the petition and I am proud to affix my signature.

#### COURT DECISION

**Mr Bob Wood (London South):** I have a petition signed by 45 people. It reads as follows:

"Whereas at this time in the province of Ontario it is not illegal for a woman to appear topless in public, and due to the fact that this lack of restriction offends a large percentage of Ontarians;

"We, the undersigned, petition the government of Ontario to introduce legislation that would make it illegal for a woman to appear topless in any public place."

#### PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

**Mr Frank Miclash (Kenora):** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas on July 15, 1996, the government of Ontario forced seniors with incomes over \$16,018 to pay an annual \$100 deductible on prescription drugs;

"Whereas this user fee imposed significant hardships on vulnerable seniors;

"Whereas on April 1, 1997, the government of Ontario unfairly and knowingly forced Ontario seniors to pay that \$100 deductible again;

"Whereas the time between July 15, 1996, and April 1, 1997, is only eight and a half months and not one year;

"Whereas the Ontario government has wrongly taken an additional \$30 million out of the pockets of seniors for prescription drugs;

"Whereas Ontario seniors feel cheated by the government of Ontario and this \$30 million ripoff shows a tremendous disrespect for Ontario seniors;

"Therefore be it resolved that the government of Ontario credit Ontario seniors for the three-and-a-half-month

overpayment they were forced to pay on prescription drugs by making the effective date for the 1998 \$100 deductible July 15, 1998, instead of April 1, 1998."

I have attached my name to that petition as well.

#### COURT DECISION

**Mrs Julia Munro (Durham-York):** I have a petition that reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Criminal Code falls under the jurisdiction of the federal government of Canada;

"Whereas the Ontario Court of Appeal has ruled that women have the lawful right to appear topless in public;

"Whereas the Liberal government of Canada has the power to change the Criminal Code to meet the needs and requirements of municipal and provincial governments in Canada and to reinstate such public nudity as an offence;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the government of the province of Ontario to urge the government of Canada to pass new legislation or amend existing legislation to ban appearing topless in public places."

This petition is signed by 21 women and men from Keswick, Jackson's Point and Pefferlaw who are constituents of my riding of Durham-York, as well as others from Newmarket. I agree with this petition and I have affixed my name to it.

#### STANDING ORDERS REFORM

**Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands):** I have another very important petition that's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It deals with the standing orders reform or the withdrawal of democratic services in the province of Ontario. It states:

"Whereas the people of Ontario want rigorous discussion on legislation dealing with public policy issues like health care, education and care for seniors; and

"Whereas many people in Ontario believe that the Mike Harris government is moving too quickly and recklessly, creating havoc with the provision of quality health care and quality education; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government has passed new legislative rules which have eroded the ability of both the public and the media to closely scrutinize the actions of the Ontario government; and

"Whereas Mike Harris and Ernie Eves, when they were both in opposition, defended the rights of the opposition and used the rules to their full advantage when they believed it was necessary to slow down the passage of controversial legislation; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government has now reduced the amount of time that MPPs will have to debate the important issues of the day; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government, through its rule changes, has diminished the role of elected members of the Legislative Assembly who are accountable to the people who elect them, and instead has chosen to concentrate

power in the Premier's office in the hands of people who are not elected officials;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, call upon Mike Harris to withdraw his draconian rule changes and restore rules which promote rigorous debate on contentious issues and hold the government accountable to the people of Ontario."

I've signed my name to it as I am in full and complete agreement with this petition.

### PROTECTION OF PRIVACY

**Mr Frank Miclash (Kenora):** I have another petition which is against fingerprinting, a plan of Mike Harris, and it says:

"To the Legislature of Ontario:

"Whereas the Premier of Ontario, Mike Harris, has proposed the fingerprinting of Ontario citizens; and

"Whereas fingerprinting of Ontarians was never promised in the Common Sense Revolution or in his election campaign; and

"Whereas universal fingerprinting of Ontario citizens is a direct violation of basic civil rights and fundamental rights of privacy; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government is intervening and intruding into all aspects of daily life, from megacity, user fees, rent controls and market value taxes, which he never promised in the election campaign;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario to oppose Mike Harris's plan to fingerprint Ontario citizens, and to respect their privacy and to stop creating a mega-government that does not respect the basic freedom and individuality of the citizens of Ontario."

I have attached my name to that petition as well.

1530

**Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre):** I have a petition but before I do, I don't believe we have a quorum.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson):** Let me check and see.

**Clerk at the Table (Mr Todd Decker):** A quorum is not present, Speaker.

*The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.*

**Clerk at the Table:** A quorum is now present, Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you. The Chair recognizes the member for London Centre for a petition.

### HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

**Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre):** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas over the half the people in Ontario are women,

"Only 5% of the money spent on medical research goes to research in women's health;

"Women have special medical needs since their bodies are not the same as men's;

"Women's College Hospital is the only hospital in Ontario with a primary mandate giving priority to research and treatment dedicated to women's health needs;

"The World Health Organization has named Women's College Hospital as the sole collaborating centre for women's health for both North and South America;

"Without Women's College Hospital, the women of Ontario and of the world will lose a health resource that will not be duplicated elsewhere;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to ensure the continuance, independence, women-centred focus and accessible downtown location of the one hospital most crucial to the future of women's health."

This is signed by 56 constituents in the city of Toronto and I'm proud to affix my signature.

### ANIMAL WELFARE

**Mr Tim Hudak (Niagara South):** I have a petition signed by 21 constituents in the Fort Erie area, like Patricia Howe of Fort Erie and Laurie Ramsay of Ridgeway. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas ownership of a domestic animal or pet is a responsibility not a right;

"Whereas owners have a responsibility to treat their pet with care and utmost concern for their wellbeing; and

"Whereas cruelty to animals should be punished and sanctioned with fines, penalties and/or bans on animal ownership; and

"Whereas inspectors of the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals should not be obstructed from carrying out their duties to investigate abuse or neglect;

"We, the undersigned, support the amendments to the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, Bill 155."

I sign my name to it.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson):** Further petitions? The Chair recognizes the member for St Catharines — I'm sorry, Kingston and The Islands.

**Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands):** They're both equally great communities in this province, Mr Speaker.

### VIDEO LOTTERY TERMINALS

**Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands):** I have another petition here, which is addressed to the government of Ontario.

"Since video lottery terminals will contribute to gambling addiction in Ontario and the resulting breakup of families, spousal and child abuse and crimes such as embezzlement and robbery; and

"Since the introduction of video lottery terminals across Ontario will provide those addicted to gambling with widespread temptation and will attract young people to a

vice which will adversely affect their lives for many years to come; and

"Since the introduction of these gambling machines across our province is designed to gain revenue for the government at the expense of the poor, the vulnerable and the desperate in order that the government can cut income taxes, to the greatest benefit of those with the highest income; and

"Since the placement of video lottery terminals in bars in Ontario and in permanent casinos in various locations across the province represents an escalation of gambling opportunities; and

"Since Mike Harris and Ernie Eves were so critical of the provincial government becoming involved in further gambling ventures and making the government more dependent on gambling revenues to maintain government operations,

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, call upon Premier Mike Harris and the government of Ontario to reconsider its announced decision to introduce the most insidious form of gambling, video lottery terminals, to restaurants and bars in the province."

I've affixed my signature to it, as I'm in complete agreement with this petition.

**Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre):** I have a petition, but I believe we do not have quorum again.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson):** Would you check if there is a quorum present, please.

**Clerk at the Table (Mr Todd Decker):** A quorum is not present, Speaker.

*The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.*

**Clerk at the Table:** A quorum is now present, Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** The Chair recognizes the member for London Centre.

### BLOOD SYSTEM

**Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre):** Thank you, Mr Speaker.

"We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, draw your attention to the following:

"That over 70% of people with haemophilia were infected with hepatitis C through the use of blood-derived treatment products. With hepatitis C, as with HIV, the same institutional players of the blood system failed to respond to the identified risk of transmission, failed to properly notify people of the potential risk of exposure, failed to implement safety measures to lessen the risk of transmission, ie, the failure of the Red Cross to implement surrogate testing for hepatitis C for over four years and now continue to deny any responsibility for these failures;

"That the representatives of Hemophilia Ontario and its hepatitis C task force have been advocating for financial compensation to those individuals who have been infected with hepatitis C through the Canadian blood system. The provincial Minister of Health, Jim Wilson, has three times cancelled meetings with Hemophilia Ontario, and the provincial and territorial ministers of health have publicly

stated that they intend to keep the issue of hepatitis C compensation off their agenda in future meetings; and

"Further, that the only prescribed treatment for hepatitis C in Ontario is alpha interferon, which has a less than 25% success rate in clearing the virus among people who have had one exposure to the virus. Many haemophiliacs were repeatedly exposed to the hepatitis C virus through the use of blood-derived treatment products. The response to interferon therapy in haemophiliacs with chronic HCV infection is poor and appears inferior to that of other groups of infected patients. In view of the generally poor response to interferon therapy in haemophiliacs, treatment with interferon is inappropriate in the majority of individuals.

"Therefore we petition the Minister of Health to meet with representatives of Hemophilia Ontario's hepatitis C task force now to discuss issues related to compensation."

I am pleased to affix my signature.

### ANIMAL WELFARE

**Mr Tim Hudak (Niagara South):** I have another petition, signed by Karin McKenney of Fort Erie and Dr Howe, also of Fort Erie, and a number of other constituents, about 21, and it reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas ownership of a domestic pet is a responsibility not a right;

"Whereas owners have a responsibility to treat their pet with care and utmost concern for their wellbeing; and

"Whereas cruelty to animals should be punished, sanctioned with fines, penalties and/or bans on animal ownership; and

"Whereas inspectors of the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals should not be obstructed from carrying out their duties to investigate abuse or neglect;

"We, the undersigned, support the amendments to the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act."

In support of the petition, I sign my name to it.

### LIQUOR CONTROL BOARD OF ONTARIO

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** I have a petition which is of particular interest, I know you will know, to those people who are interested in the wine industry in the Niagara region. It reads as follows:

"To the government of Ontario:

"Whereas the government of Ontario appears to be moving towards the privatization of retail liquor and spirit sales in the province; and

"Whereas the LCBO provides a safe, secure and controlled way of retailing alcoholic beverages; and

"Whereas the LCBO provides the best method of restricting the sale of liquor to minors in Ontario; and

"Whereas the LCBO has an excellent program of quality control of the products sold in its stores; and

"Whereas the LCBO provides a wide selection of product to its customers in modern, convenient stores; and

"Whereas the LCBO has moved forward with the times, sensitive to the needs of its customers and its clients; and

"Whereas the LCBO is an important instrument for the promotion and sale of Ontario wine and thereby contributes immensely to grape growing and the wine producing industry;

"Therefore, be it resolved that the government of Ontario abandon its plan to turn over the sale of liquor and spirits to private liquor stores and retain the LCBO for that purpose."

I affix my signature as I'm in complete agreement with this petition.

1540

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### TIME ALLOCATION

**Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Labour):** I move that, pursuant to standing order 46 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 136, An Act to provide for the expeditious resolution of disputes during collective bargaining in certain sectors and to facilitate collective bargaining following restructuring in the public sector and to make certain amendments to the Employment Standards Act and the Pay Equity Act, when Bill 136 is next called as a government order, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill without further debate or amendment, and at such time the bill shall be referred to the standing committee on resources development;

That the standing committee on resources development shall be authorized to meet to consider the bill on September 23, 1997, following routine proceedings until 6 pm, and from 7 pm to 9:30 pm;

That the standing committee on resources development shall further be authorized to meet to consider the bill on September 24, 1997, and September 25, 1997, from 9 am to 12 pm, and following routine proceedings until 6 pm, and from 7 pm to 9:30 pm;

That the standing committee on resources development shall further be authorized to meet to consider the bill on September 26, 1997, from 9 am to 12 pm and from 1 pm to 5 pm;

That all proposed amendments shall be filed with the clerk of the committee by 10 am on September 29, 1997;

That the committee shall be authorized to meet for clause-by-clause consideration of the bill on September 29, 1997, at its regularly scheduled meeting time and from 7 pm to 9:30 pm;

That the committee shall further be authorized to meet for clause-by-clause consideration of the bill on Septem-

ber 30, 1997, following routine proceedings until the completion of clause-by-clause consideration;

At 5 pm on September 30, 1997, those amendments which have not yet been moved shall be deemed to have been moved, and the Chair of the committee shall interrupt the proceedings and shall, without further debate or amendment, put every question necessary to dispose of all remaining sections of the bill and any amendments thereto. Any divisions required shall be deferred until all remaining questions have been put and taken in succession with one 20-minute waiting period allowed pursuant to standing order 127(a);

That the committee shall report the bill to the House not later than the first sessional day that reports from committees may be received following the completion of clause-by-clause consideration. In the event that the committee fails to report the bill on that day, the bill shall be deemed to be passed by the committee and shall be deemed to be reported to and received by the House;

That, upon receiving the report of the standing committee on resources development, the Speaker shall put the question for adoption of the report forthwith, and at such time the bill shall be ordered for third reading;

That one sessional day shall be allotted to the third reading stage of the bill. At 5:45 pm or 9:15 pm as the case may be on such day, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and shall put every question necessary to dispose of this stage of the bill without further debate or amendment;

That, in the case of any division relating to any proceedings on the bill, the division bell shall be limited to five minutes.

**Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I know the minister gave a commitment in the House that there would be public hearings throughout Ontario and I'm sure she would want to correct —

*Interjections.*

**Mr Gerretsen:** No, just hear me out. I'm sure she would want to correct this motion by adding the missing paragraph that the committee will be travelling throughout Ontario and will be holding public hearings. That's my point of order. Would the minister confirm that a paragraph is missing in this motion?

**The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson):** That is not a point of order. The Chair recognizes the minister from Waterloo North.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Mr Speaker, I will be speaking to this time allocation motion and I will be sharing my time with the member for Hamilton West and the member for Quinte.

It is a pleasure for me to rise and to have this opportunity to describe in very clear terms why the government is moving forward to the next stage in the legislative process for Bill 136, the Public Sector Transition Stability Act.

I want to state at the outset of my remarks that our government has been and remains committed to dialogue, consultation and communication on Bill 136. For example, prior to the introduction of Bill 136, regardless of what

may be said by others, there was consultation. As a result of the consultation with the union leaders, Bill 136 did maintain successor rights for broader public sector employees and did not intervene in collective agreements to eliminate restrictions on contracting out. I think it's extremely important that that point is stressed and the point made that that was in response to the concerns that we had heard voiced from the unions.

We have over the course of the last three and a half months, ever since the introduction of this legislation in June, regularly by way of both verbal and written invitations, indicated our willingness to meet with employers, employees, labour leaders and others who wanted to discuss this bill.

As a result, I am extremely pleased to say that there have been meetings and there have been discussions which did take place, not only prior to the introduction of the bill but also during the months of July, August and September, and I would like to focus specifically on some of these meetings which have resulted in very extensive consultations.

On September 2 the Premier and myself, as well as several of my cabinet colleagues, met with senior representatives of some of Ontario's trade unions. The unions that met with us on September 2 included the Ontario Federation of Labour, the Canadian Union of Public Employees, the Ontario Public Service Employees' Union, the Service Employees International Union, the Amalgamated Transit Union, the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation as well as OECTA and the firefighters' association.

I know this meeting was positive, it was constructive and it was worthwhile. In fact in a letter I wrote yesterday, September 16, to Gord Wilson, the president of the Ontario Federation of Labour, I indicated: "We were all pleased with the outcome of the meeting involving the Premier, myself and labour groups on September 2. At that time, we agreed that further meetings at the staff level would be beneficial."

As a result of that first meeting on September 2, which was so very positive, additional consultation sessions were set up with the Ontario federation and its affiliates such as CUPE, OPSEU, SEIU, ATU and others. In fact these consultation sessions were held on September 9, 11 and 12.

1550

Again, these were very productive meetings and we had an opportunity to thoroughly take a look at the document that had been presented by the OFL. We took a look at their recommendations regarding the transferring of some of the responsibilities for the LRTC to the OLRB. We discussed their concern about the neutrality of the commissioners. We looked at the arbitration system.

As I would stress, each and every concern that was raised in the OFL document was thoroughly discussed. As I indicated to Mr Wilson yesterday in my letter, the meetings were very productive in that they provided an opportunity for in-depth discussion of the OFL Alternatives document and a very frank exchange of rationale, views

and expectations. I indicate that the meeting was very helpful from the government's perspective. I go on to indicate that no final decisions have been made on the legislation.

I want to stress again that we have had the meetings with the OFL, we've had the meetings with the other stakeholder groups, and those meetings will continue to go forward. We are looking forward to continued dialogue with the OFL, we're looking forward to continued dialogue with the police, as well as AMO, as well as the OHA, as well as all of the other stakeholders. As I would stress to you, these meetings have been very positive and very productive. We certainly now have an opportunity to take a look at everything that is on the table.

As we've been meeting with not only the OFL but also AMO, the Ontario Hospital Association and the Toronto transition commission, I want to stress the fact that AMO has indicated to us, as has the OHA, that there is a need for Bill 136 and certainly they support the principles found within the bill as well. Mr Power, the new president of AMO, has stressed the need for the legislation, as has Mr MacKinnon from the OHA.

I want to indicate that the point we're at today is that all of these consultations will be ongoing. These consultations that are staff-to-staff or between myself and different members of the stakeholder community will continue. For those who would try to convey a different impression, that is certainly not the case. It is my hope, and I believe I speak on behalf of my colleagues —

**Mr Len Wood (Cochrane North):** On a point of order, Speaker: I don't believe we have a quorum. Would you check, please.

**The Acting Speaker:** Yes, I will. Would you check and see if there's a quorum present.

**Clerk at the Table (Mr Todd Decker):** A quorum is not present, Speaker.

*The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.*

**Clerk at the Table:** A quorum is now present, Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** The Chair recognizes the minister from Waterloo North.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** As I was saying, and I want to stress this, we actually now will continue to engage in consultations with some of the parties we have already been in consultation with, and of course that includes the Ontario municipalities and the Ontario Hospital Association, as well as the nurses, as well as the OFL. I've stressed how very positive and fruitful those discussions were — the police association as well. While those discussions continue, and for those who would indicate otherwise, that these discussions are not fruitful, I would certainly indicate and stress to you that they are.

However, it is now time for us to also move forward and move beyond private consultation to a much more public consultation phase, and that is the committee stage of the legislative process we're now actually into. As I indicated to Mr Wilson in my letter yesterday, where I say, "I want to assure you that as consultations continue, both at committee and through direct discussions with

interested parties, we will continue to give the OFL Alternatives document due consideration." We're now at a point where we're going to move into public consultation.

To illustrate our commitment to this open line of communication, it is important that the members of this House know that prior to the tabling of this time allocation motion yesterday by the House leader, I personally contacted many of the employer groups that we had been in consultation with. I contacted the employee representatives, as well as the members in the opposition benches and the president of the OFL, in order that they would know that the government was now moving forward in the legislative process, moving forward into a more public consultation phase.

If we look at Bill 136, it has already undergone three full days at second reading. This has allowed dozens of members, both our members and members in the opposition, with the opportunity to provide some very valuable commentary on the proposed legislation. I can assure you that we are listening very carefully to the dialogue that has been ongoing in this House and to the feedback that we're getting from the stakeholders.

If this motion that we're debating today is passed, our time allocation motion will allow for four full days of committee hearings on Bill 136, as well as two additional days of clause-by-clause analysis. These six days will provide for over 30 hours of public hearings. These four days will also provide an opportunity for many presenters to appear before the committee in order to engage in a public dialogue with the government on this legislation, as we look forward to coming back and making, certainly, amendments and changes to our legislation as a result of the input that we have received and will be receiving in the future.

I am advised that the government members of the standing committee on resources development have expressed an interest in taking a look at new technology and they are interested in using new and innovative ways to receive public input on Bill 136. As you well know, in the past when committees have engaged in the committee hearings, whether it has been confined to only Toronto or whether it has been travelling, there are many communities within this province that have never been visited by any of our committees. We usually end up going to the same cities time and time again. We are taking a look at moving forward and obviously this is something that we within this House will continue to take a look at, and that is, how can you make sure that you reach people in all parts of this province and provide them with the opportunity to give feedback on legislation? We are exploring the use of teleconferencing so that the committee can receive submissions from some of these more distant and isolated communities across Ontario. I would also hasten to add that if it was the decision of the committee to travel on the Friday, obviously that's a decision they could make as well.

1600

I know some opposition members are going to say that this amount of committee consideration does not satisfy

their own personal views of how much time is needed to consider Bill 136 at the committee stage. In order to really understand and to satisfy some of these criticisms, we need to step back. It's important to compare the proposed committee time we have for Bill 136 with the previous NDP government's Bill 48, the Social Contract Act. This bill also dealt with the subject of broader public sector collective bargaining.

However, before I make the procedural comparison between the two bills, I want to emphasize that Bill 136 is certainly a very different piece of legislation from the social contract. While the social contract interfered directly with collective bargaining outcomes by forcing wage rollbacks and days off without pay in order that the NDP government could remove billions of dollars from the wages of broader public sector employees, our legislation, on the other hand, promotes collective bargaining.

The social contract, as you well know, Mr Speaker, also suspended effectively the right to strike and lockout, for not one year but for three years. It also overrode the Employment Standards Act for Ontario's workers as well as overriding the system of interest arbitration by dictating that awards that were going to allow for an increase in compensation for broader public sector employees were totally null and void for a three-year period. In fact, it is unbelievable what the NDP did to employees in this province with their social contract as they effectively overrode collective agreements and prevented employees in this province from being awarded the increases in wages to which they were entitled.

I'd like now to contrast this to our bill. Bill 136 builds on the long-standing history in this province of collective bargaining. It is proposing the establishment of mechanisms to facilitate the resolution of collective bargaining issues which may arise out of broader public sector restructuring. Bill 136 encourages the workplace parties to negotiate, themselves, expeditious and timely local solutions while ensuring that all employees, whether unionized or non-unionized, are treated fairly. Unlike the social contract, Bill 136 does not contain the wage rollbacks or the days off without pay that were legislated by the NDP.

Bill 136, as I have indicated, encourages collective bargaining. If the workplace parties are not themselves able to resolve some of the issues in the wake of the restructuring of municipalities, school boards and hospitals, it puts in place a process to ensure that the restructuring can take place in a timely and expeditious manner.

For example, Bill 136 will help the workplace parties if they themselves cannot decide which union will be the new bargaining agent after a restructuring. It will help the workplace parties to decide who is part of the new bargaining unit if the workplace parties themselves cannot decide. It will also help them to arrive at a decision regarding seniority of the employees.

For example, we know that in the midst of the restructuring, we're going to be bringing together not only different bargaining units — sometimes it's going to be two, three, four or five — but we're also going to be bringing together non-unionized employees with unionized

employees, so we need to make absolutely certain that the rights of those individuals are fairly protected. Our legislation ensures that if the workplace parties themselves cannot agree on the issue of seniority, there is protection there for all employees whether they're unionized or non-unionized.

As well, our Bill 136 will help the workplace parties in the event that they cannot themselves decide on what the first collective agreement is going to look like.

But at the end of the day, much of what is contained within Bill 136 will not be used by those workplace parties who are able themselves to resolve these issues by means of collective bargaining. We're encouraging people to do this in a serious manner.

I'd like to go back to the Social Contract Act. I'd like to remind the members of this House, particularly the NDP, that they introduced this legislation on June 17, 1993, and just over three weeks later it received royal assent. That was on July 9, 1993. It's unbelievable that they would be criticizing this bill and its content and also unbelievable that they would be criticizing the days of debate we've already had. I think I need to remind them that their Social Contract Act did not ever allow for any committee hearings whatsoever; they just went in and did an override of all collective agreements, and they determined the outcomes as they rolled back the wages and people were forced to take days off without pay. Compared to the social contract, Bill 136 has already been before this Legislature for more than three times the total amount of time it took to pass the Social Contract Act from first reading to royal assent.

I need to stress one more time that the former government did not allow for one single day of public hearings. In fact, Mr Brian Charlton, the former NDP government House leader, said, "I think it's the responsibility of this government to ensure that this legislation is amended and passed as quickly as is possible, so that those parties...that will be impacted by this legislation, whether the employers or the employees, will fully understand the context in which either a negotiation and a settlement will be reached..." It's unbelievable, with all the rhetoric we've heard, that they're now singing from a different songbook.

Unlike the NDP, we are very happy to continue to consult on Bill 136. As I've indicated, we will continue our private discussions with the OFL, the OHA and OMA and the police associations and whoever else, but we are also now going to give the rest of the stakeholders in this province the opportunity for their input. As I've indicated to you, we're going to have four days of public hearings. We're going to take a look at the option of using teleconferencing in order that for the first time, unlike other governments, we look at bringing in those people to make presentations who have never done so themselves. This government, unlike the previous NDP government, wants to communicate with the organizations in this province. We want to communicate with people in this province who are affected by this legislation. That is our commitment.

#### 1610

We have also made a commitment to change. As we listen to the input, we will certainly entertain all of the information and all of the recommendations for change, as we did last week as we had the opportunity to look at their changes.

During second reading debate on Bill 136, members from both the opposition parties accused the government originally of threatening to impose passage of this legislation by the end of August. They also indicated earlier on this year that we were not interested in listening to the parties affected by the bill. The opposition obviously have been proven wrong in the past, and they were proven wrong.

We had no desire to pass this legislation by the end of August. We had absolutely no desire to bypass the listening process. In fact, as early as July, I had communicated to all the stakeholders, including Mr Wilson, by letter that we wanted to engage in consultations. We have been able to do so. The consultations have been fruitful. I can't emphasize and stress often enough the fact that they were extremely useful.

We now have an opportunity to move further into committee hearings. I should add that as we go forward on Bill 136, this will add to the over 720 hours of public committee hearings which this government engaged in last year alone.

Using time allocation, we will now be able to move forward to the next stage of the consultation process. I want to remind the members opposite that the previous NDP government used the legislative tool that we are using today no fewer than 23 separate times.

In closing, the government will be very closely monitoring the committee process of Bill 136. As I have indicated to you, we will certainly be seriously considering any proposals and all suggestions in the context of meeting the following objectives: We need to ensure that we have a smooth transition to the new restructured models and we want to minimize the disruption of important and necessary public services. We want to also ensure fair treatment of both unionized and non-unionized employees.

We look forward to further consultation and dialogue with all of the stakeholders, both employer and employee representatives. This consultation is needed in order that the government can proceed with making the changes that are so imperative to dealing with the labour relations issues that will undoubtedly arise from restructuring in the broader sector.

Mr Speaker, that concludes my remarks, but I would certainly indicate to you again that we've had good consultation. We will certainly use the input that has been provided thus far. We are now embarking on the next stage, and that is to hear from the public as to what their concerns are and what their recommendations will be in order that at the end of the day we have a bill that reflects not only the objectives but also the concerns of the people with whom we have engaged in consultation.

**Mrs Lillian Ross (Hamilton West):** I'm pleased to rise today in support of the Minister of Labour and the bill

that she has brought forward, Bill 136, the Public Sector Transition Stability Act.

**Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre):** What a lackey. No public inquiry on Plastimet. Ram this through. You're from a labour town.

**Mrs Ross:** I'm from a labour town. You're absolutely right, and I'm proud of it. But I'm from a town that wants fair and equitable treatment for everyone.

**Mr Christopherson:** You're a disgrace to that town.

**The Acting Speaker:** The member for Hamilton Centre, come to order.

**Mrs Ross:** The principle of this bill is to provide public sector employers and employees with the tools and processes they need to deal with the changes that are coming forward with municipalities, school boards and hospitals. The goal is to improve accountability, efficiency, effectiveness and affordability.

Bill 136 creates a temporary process and temporary rules to help deal with onetime mergers. The bill has a sunset clause of December 31, 2001. I think that's important to remember while we discuss this bill.

We've heard a lot of talk about the fact that we're not listening, we're not consulting. It's been my experience in this government that we consult on an everyday basis. The Minister of Labour is one of the ministers, I've found, who consults more than anyone else. Any time I've requested a meeting with labour, with the minister, she's been very receptive and always made a spot to meet with those people. So I think she has continued to meet.

Everyone knows by now that on July 24, the minister invited Gord Wilson, the president of the Ontario Federation of Labour, to meet to discuss Bill 136. Of course, he wasn't prepared to meet at that time, but I understand that discussions are ongoing now with the OFL, with the police and with other unions. I'm pleased to see that.

Every single committee that I've sat on, every single bill that I've sat with and listened to the consultation from the people coming forward, has been changed to reflect some of those concerns that we heard. I'm confident that some of the concerns that we're hearing on this bill will also bring forward changes to reflect what we're hearing.

The bill helps employers who are undergoing amalgamation, mergers or restructuring to help with labour issues and with the issues that need to be addressed. For example: What union represents employees when two or more unions merge? What collective agreement will they abide by? What about seniority? How do you settle matters of seniority? What about the terms of reference? All of these are issues that need to be decided. This bill provides a process for that to happen.

I think that when you talk about there being no support for this bill, indeed there is some support for this bill. I have a couple of supporting letters. One is from the county of Bruce: "The corporation of the county of Bruce... strongly requests that the provincial government proceed with Bill 136."

Also, "The Human Resources Professionals Association of Ontario supports the government's initiative to establish by legislative means a process which will ensure

a timely and cost-effective way of dealing with disputes that may arise out of the amalgamation of municipalities, hospitals and school boards across the province."

Michael Power, the new president of the AMO, says, "This is legislation that municipalities have asked for," and that "the government is open to changes."

Those are some supporting letters.

I also have one here from the Regional Chairs of Ontario, of whom Terry Cooke, the regional chairman of Hamilton-Wentworth, is a member. Terry Cooke acknowledges, "Through Bill 136 your government has tried to respond to long-standing municipal interests and positions which include the need to reform the arbitration process and the flexibility to manage within a dynamic environment of significant change and restructuring." The letter further states: "Your government's efforts to establish an unbiased labour relations process that is fair and offers speedy resolution to labour issues is appreciated." That is even signed by the regional chairs of Ontario, of which Terry Cooke, our regional chairman, is a member. So there is support out there in the community for Bill 136, the Public Sector Transition Stability Act.

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I want to briefly mention as well — I won't go into the details because that was gone over by the minister and several other people — that as a government we still rely on and hope that workplace parties will come to agreement. The employers, employees and unions have a responsibility, and they appreciate that is a responsibility as well. Only if they are unable to come to a solution will the Labour Relations Transition Commission become involved.

I think there are a lot of things in this bill that will help municipalities, school boards and hospitals with the amalgamation process and make the process a lot easier and protect the taxpayers, which is what we are here for. So I rise in support of Bill 136 and in support of the Minister of Labour, who I think is one of the most honest, sincere and respectable ministers.

**Mr E.J. Douglas Rollins (Quinte):** It gives me great pleasure today to rise in support of the Minister of Labour in her efforts to bring forth some balancing or evenness in our community. For a long time we listened to a social contract that caused rollbacks, that caused some people to lose their jobs, that cut back the days they were working. This has none of those implications.

We need to have together some way of making sure that the services to the rest of the people in Ontario are not interrupted. We need to be able to carry those services forth with the kind of commitment we can make to people and let people get along, and we know that those people can get along if they are given that opportunity. If we put the power, in putting together those different groups of people, some union and some non-union, into making make sure they each have their voice heard, I'm sure that at the end of the day we will still see the same kind of united service we have been used to in the past, with a lot fewer interruptions and no rollbacks.

The minister better than a year and a half ago travelled down to Belleville and met with my mayor and two or three of the reeves of the municipalities that were amalgamating to find out what we had to do, what she had to do to bring them together. We had a group of people, half of them one union, half another union, and another group that weren't in any union. We wanted to make sure that when we had that kind of service, those people could be amalgamated and the taxpayers of the province would still see the same kind of service they had been used to over the past, with no interruptions.

Yes, there are some people who have some concerns; the teeter-totter has always been tipped in their favour. But there are not rollbacks. We're not going to do what the social contract did in the past to take away those days, to cut down and to save those dollars in that method. We've got to make sure that these different municipalities are amalgamated with efficiency and with the least public upset of service to the people of Ontario, the taxpayers, and that's whom we have to look after.

When the parties have been unable to resolve these issues, there have to be some things put in to make it fair in a way that they can join together and make sure they get to that goal and have the support they need to solve the problem without interrupting the service. In the hospitals and in the police and fire services, we have to maintain that kind of service. We can't have a continual disruption of service.

As you well know, Bob White, way back on June 29, 1993, thought the social contract was the worst thing that had ever happened to labour in this province and stated so and was publicly embarrassed by what the NDP had done to the workers of this great province of Ontario. We do not want to think that will ever happen again, and Bill 136 can level the playing field and make sure we do not take away from those workers.

There are a lot of leaders in the community and many workers out there, 170,000 members of one group, and another group trying to come together. We've got to have some rules in there to make sure that when those members come together, they have the tools to work with. That's something the last government did not see fit to do. "Bang" went the hammer on very short notice, "These are the rules." We are going to be listening.

We've got six days, as the minister has said, with over 30 hours of public hearings. As long as those public hearings aren't the same rhetoric we have heard on bill after bill — the same thing, yes, a different face saying it — and people put in some genuine criticism so we can improve this legislation, Bill 136, I am sure the minister will listen, make those adjustments and make sure that as we bring forth the final legislation, we can bring to bear some of those things that need to be done to have a smoother workplace.

This legislation will ensure that as the public sector organization restructures, employees are treated fairly. That is the word we need to listen to, "fairly," and that is what we have to do. If we do not treat those employees fairly, it

is not to the benefit of you, Mr Speaker, or anybody else in the province. They have to be dealt with fairly.

I think the minister has proven time and time again that she is willing to listen. The big thing is to be able to listen and make sure we make some adjustments so that those amalgamations take place, and the bottom line is that the service has to continue with no interruptions. We cannot allow the taxpayers of the province to have interruption in their services. They need the services they have.

Yes, for some of the sectors the striking privilege is not there, but they don't need to worry about that because they still will be dealt with fairly.

We have a lot of changes, but there's one big change we're not going to make. I haven't heard and I don't think anybody has heard the minister say anything about rollbacks. When we talk about rollbacks, who loses in rollbacks? We have got to be able to join together and go forward. Our government is not interested in confrontation but in making sure the thing moves very smoothly between the small groups, making sure they get amalgamated and that we can still perform the amalgamations we have to do over the long haul under this Bill 136.

I'm looking at some of the records we have put together. They talk about how fast we're going and how long we've had. We have had over 720 hours of consultation in the last year. The NDP in their last year, 1994, had 681 hours of consultation. I don't know; by my mathematics, I thought we had a little bit more. The Liberals, previous to that, had 529 hours. So there are some consultations going on there, and I think we are going to continue to do that.

As the minister has mentioned, we are taking a look at some video conferencing so that we could bring in some people from outlying areas. We were lucky enough to be at a meeting at noon today, and the member over there on the other side sat in the chair and directed us in how we could see some people from Manitoba and listen to them. We can listen all over this province to people in smaller communities that we haven't been able to travel to, which would be keeping those people back. I think it's going to be a great asset to this government now and in the future to be able to listen to some of the people in those small communities of Ontario making their points heard. We don't have to travel all the way there. We can do it through video conferencing, and it will help out.

**Mr Christopherson:** You're afraid to face the people.

**Mr Rollins:** We're not afraid to face the people, but we're afraid to face the people with the same rhetoric. You have been to —

**Mr Christopherson:** You were afraid on Bill 7, you were afraid on Bill 99 and you're afraid on 136.

**Mr Rollins:** This fellow here isn't afraid of one damn thing.

**Mr Christopherson:** You're a coward.

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**Mr Rollins:** I don't have to sit and holler and yell and scream to get my point across. Dave, I'm not afraid of anybody, never have been afraid of anybody.

**Mr Christopherson:** You are afraid.

**Mr Rollins:** No, Dave. Come on, you're the kind of person who wants to holler and yell.

**The Acting Speaker:** Order. Please take your seat. I think it would be very helpful if the member speaking would address his remarks to the Chair. It will also be very helpful if we don't have interjections. The Chair recognizes the member for Quinte.

**Mr Rollins:** I'm sorry I lost my cool and directed my words to the wrong place.

We as a government have got to listen. We have been listening; the minister has been listening. She has met with the labour leaders. She has asked them to bring forth their commitments to the bill. They brought in some things that I believe she has said in her addresses she will make some changes to. I think over the next six days, when those bills come in, they will be listened to. We will make some adjustments. We may not tear the bill apart and throw it all away like some of our opposition members would like us to do, but we will make some adjustments to it, guaranteed.

In my short time here I haven't seen any bills that came into this House in a drafted form to start with that stayed in that form. We've always added some changes to them and I'm sure we will add some more changes to them.

Just going back, the main principle of this bill is, simply and straightforward, to provide public sector employees and employers the tools and a process to deal with the changes in any way to deliver the public service the best we can, always keeping in mind that the taxpayers of Ontario are a people we've got to be able to serve. The taxpayers demand that those people have got to have that type of service; they've got to be sure there is no interruption of that service. Yes, there are some collective agreements. We're not tearing up any collective agreements and we're only doing it for a period of two years. Two years is a lot less time than what the social contract was.

I'd also like to think that the minister has listened. I told you before that she came to our community and met with our community leaders when they had a concern about how they could amalgamate fire departments that were unionized and fire departments that weren't unionized. Those people, when we sat down with her and our community and municipal leaders, listened to her, and she came back with what we had to do. These are the parts of Bill 136 that we've got to put back in place to make sure this happens.

When the parties are unable to solve the problem themselves, there has to be a mechanism put in place so we can have some kind of arbitration to make sure there is a settlement mechanism in place without both just going off in their own corners and staying there. We've tried to put together a different method of appointing some people in there to make sure those people can listen to the problems and try to balance out the differences between the employee and employer. I think that's how the system has to work.

In closing, it gives me great pleasure to say that I support my minister and this government in the way that

we're trying to deal and look forward to further debate on the issues.

**Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre):** First off, I'd like to say that I'll be sharing my time with the member for St Catharines and the member for Timiskaming.

I'd like to provide a little bit of a backdrop for this because you can see a pattern emerging very quickly, aided by the rule changes this government has recently brought in, in order to expedite, as they say, to move ahead, as the minister says, to do the job they have to do. The problem is that some of us happen to disagree with the definition of the job to be done.

Everybody at the end of the day agrees that through any restructuring you want to make sure there a minimal amount of disruption. But should that be done at the expense of the rights of some employees throughout Ontario? Should this be done at the expense of a long history of evolution and a relationship built up between the labour movement and between employers and employees? It is our considered opinion that this is a sign of brinkmanship, that it does not provide —

**Mr Len Wood:** On a point of order, Madam Speaker: I don't believe there is a quorum here. Would you check, please?

**The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley):** Thank you. Clerk, is there a quorum?

**Clerk at the Table:** A quorum is not present, Speaker.

*The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.*

**Clerk at the Table:** A quorum is now present, Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** The member for Ottawa Centre.

**Mr Patten:** The pattern I referred to before with the rule changes the government brought in shows us that while the government says it's listening, it really wants to limit the debate.

I'd like to refer to a bill that has just been completed, the workers' compensation bill, Bill 99, where again there was time allocation and the imposition of limitations to how many days and how many hours we could sit to listen to people. We had six days.

When we use the terms "days," a sessional day for a hearing or for a committee meeting may only be two to two and a half hours, depending on what time the House changes its agenda in the afternoon for members to be able to go to that committee meeting.

The public should be aware of that, and because of the time allocation — there were 256 pages of amendments on the WCB bill; our party put forward 57 of those — there were five days set aside for consideration of them and the committee had literally four days to draft its amendments to the bill based on what it heard from the depositions and the witnesses' comments.

If you truly listen to what people say and take note, then there's a fair amount of work to put forward amendments that make sense or that will ameliorate the bill in any particular fashion.

I want to come back to this a little later because this time allocation closure motion is worse than the WCB bill. If the workers were pretty upset about that, wait till

they read the fine print on this one. They will be quite upset.

The minister says that she is still in consultation, that she is still open to changes etc. I'd like to believe her, I really would, but it's my considered view that this is an overall strategy by the government and that the minister doesn't really have the authority or is not really given the authority to do what I think she probably would want to do: to do the right thing and to listen very carefully to people in a reasonable time frame. I'll come back to try to deal with that in a few moments.

1640

This place of course uses legislative jargon and often people don't know what the terms really mean. What this closure motion really means, in a nutshell, is that it stops debate at second reading, which is where we are at the moment. It ends that. It also has no provision for public hearings outside Toronto or outside this Legislature. Four days of public hearings. The one issue that I think is the most revealing of all in terms of the sentiments and the concern of this government is, how much time is there, once you've heard people speak and represent a variety of views, to draft amendments to the bill? That is the most telling action that is implicit in this particular motion.

In response to a question I asked on June 4, whether she would indeed have public hearings — I brought this up earlier but I think it's important to reiterate — the minister said: "Yes, I commit to you" — this is to the House — "that there will be full public hearings. We will travel the province, we will be in Toronto and we will listen." Unless there's another way of travelling — and I'm sure there is — the only way I know of for people bodily to travel around is that they literally, physically leave.

The minister may be an astro-traveller and may have other means of travelling, but I believe it means you get out of Toronto and you go to other places that have concerns, because many municipalities have concerns, many people in different workforces have concerns. Certainly all the people in our essential services have major concerns. The government says it has been in consultation with them. We don't disagree that they have had some discussions with them, but obviously they haven't listened or haven't modified very much, because all those same groups are telling us, and there are reports in the media, that they are still unhappy.

There was discussion with the OFL. The OFL had a news release today and what did they say? Gord Wilson, the president of the Ontario Federation of Labour, said today at the end of an emergency meeting with leaders of broader public sector unions and teachers' federations — they had a special meeting — as well as representatives from nurses and firefighters, "It's obvious to organized labour today that the Harris government had no intention of altering Bill 136 from the very beginning. Nothing has changed."

He goes on to say: "The so-called changes are nothing more than fluff and window dressing. Essentially Bill 136

and what it will do to workers in Ontario has remained unchanged." This is September 17; that's today.

The minister said today, "We have ongoing consultations, ongoing meetings." I would suggest to her that she's going to need some of those ongoing meetings.

Mr Wilson goes on to say, my last quote from him, "In their haste to ram this legislation through the House the Harris government has provided for only four days of public hearings and only in Toronto, in order to have Bill 136 in place by October 2, 1997. To schedule four days of hearings on legislation that will affect the rights of over 700,000 workers is outrageous. The government's position on Bill 136 will only intensify confrontation after January 1, 1998," when this particular piece of legislation will take effect.

I have trouble squaring the comments of the minister and some of the members in the government when they say that they are having amicable and meaningful discussions on this particular piece of legislation, because their so-called third parties are not saying that they're very happy at this particular time. If they're ongoing ones, then the government better get on with some of these in order to proceed.

One of the ways of course that the minister can get herself out of an embarrassing situation is to jump on and grab the concept of teleconferencing, where you have in your committee meeting a television screen and you have some group or an individual providing testimony from a place outside of Queen's Park. It's not the same thing. As a matter of fact, today the chairs and vice-chairs of committees had a demonstration on teleconferencing from Manitoba, a jurisdiction that has used it, but in a limited fashion.

One of the members asked: "How widely would you use this? Would you see this as a replacement for face-to-face hearings?" They said quite clearly that, no, this is not a replacement; this is an enhancement. Where they would look at using this is where they would have less than five requests for people or organizations to comment. In that case it might be less expensive to use this particular vehicle of communication than for the full committee to travel to that area or for people to come to Queen's Park.

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** But they've got lots of money for advertising, though.

**Mr Patten:** That's right; lots of money for advertising, but not too much money to go visit people in the jurisdiction. Of course, the message was — and I asked the members from Manitoba this question because I know sometimes some people in Ontario feel this way — that it's really the province of Toronto rather than the province of Ontario. You know there's that sense outside this fair city and outside Queen's Park, that people feel there isn't the sensitivity to what happens in their area of Ontario. Certainly in the north and in eastern Ontario and some parts of southwestern Ontario I know that feeling exists because we get representations on that particular issue all the time.

This would not replace that, so I hope the minister will reconsider and show to all the people of Ontario that she

truly is interested in going out, reaching out and listening to what people have to say. Hopefully she will attend some of these hearings herself because the decision-makers are seldom at the hearing; it's usually the government-side backbenchers and the opposition. Of course, we're not part of the decision-making of government.

Very often the backbenchers sitting on the committee, when they hear from certain witnesses who are articulate and can communicate their feelings and their views — it has an impact. It definitely has an impact and it moves them. They're moved personally. But you can't be moved if it's an objective process and things are just designed from the back rooms of the Premier's office: "Overall, here's our master plan; here's what we're going to do and you've got to fall in line." That makes it very, very difficult, I'm sure, for the backbenchers on the government side. Some of them do speak up. I hope more of them will follow their conscience and speak up as well, because I know they feel that way, that there are things that should be changed in different pieces of legislation.

Related to this particular motion, we will have four days — which essentially is not a full day; some of those are two and a half hours, as I mentioned — an afternoon, an evening, part of another day. The government has even kindly offered a Friday, where we'll have from 9 through 12 and from 1 to 5 on the 26th, which is a week this Friday. We'll finish and complete hearing from who comes before us. That leaves two days, the weekend, Saturday and Sunday to respond, consider, draft, react to good points made by people who have provided some thoughtful advice.

But in terms of our business days, what an insult. We've got an hour of one business day to draft our amendments and get them checked legally by legislative legal counsel, because not all of us are lawyers, and submit them. Once they're submitted, that's it; no more amendments can be made, it's my understanding, even though there may be some new insight or understanding on behalf of members from all parties. That is it.

1650

What a stale process and procedure. It presumes there is nothing to be learned from the hearings, because even if the government did listen and hear and want to do something, when would they be doing their drafting? On Friday night, on Saturday, on Sunday? When will they be having their cabinet meeting to review some significant recommendations for change? Will they be meeting on Sunday morning? Will they be meeting on Saturday night?

They won't be meeting on Saturday night, so the only conclusion one can draw on this is that they really have already made up their minds as to what they want to do. All they need to do is have an hour because they've drafted all their own amendments — if they have any, and I suspect they have some. Which ones have substance is yet to be seen. But one hour; what an insult. It's an embarrassment.

Anybody who knows these procedures now knows that. That's why we get so angry and that's why we feel it's a sham when we see this procedure, because you can't do it.

Even with Bill 99, the WCB bill, we only had four days. Our caucus put forward 57 amendments. We had to go through each one individually and try to get the legal terminology and what common understanding and usage and legal interpretation mean on the modifications we had if we wanted to change what our interpretation of the intention of a particular article was.

This is not taken lightly. When people at home see the opposition get angry and get upset, there is good reason for that, because it effectively says: "We're must moving this thing along. We're bulldozing through." If there was any indication that the government truly was going to listen to what people would have to say at the hearings, then they would change that date from Monday morning at 10 o'clock to perhaps Thursday or whatever to allow some time to provide some thinking and some considered thought.

It's very, very frustrating to play a role as an elected member in a thoughtful manner, in a responsible manner, when those kinds of conditions are put before you and you know it's almost impossible to do the kind of job that you know you're capable of doing.

I would offer that to the minister and I would hope that she would ponder that point and consider it. Like I say, I'm sure she would, as an individual, because I think she would probably like to do this, but of course, this government has a master plan and she may be caught up in all that.

The minister has referred a couple of times to the social contract, the legislation that was employed by the previous government, the NDP government, and uses that as a benchmark, but says she didn't agree with it obviously. But if you say you don't agree with it, then why would you use that as a precedent in order to justify the legislation that you're putting forward?

It is like tit for tat. To me, it is not a mature response. It would seem to me that if I disagreed with a piece of legislation, I would say, "Here is what I've learned from that experience and therefore I will not do the same kind of thing," or, "I would not proceed with similar measures." It doesn't seem to me to be too logical to say, "They did this and therefore, it's okay for us to do it." I offer that to the minister.

The minister says that time allocation is a way of moving ahead. Of course it's a way of moving ahead for the government, but I suggest it is a very slippery slope and that from all the indications we have — not just from my opinion, but talk to the media, talk to the groups individually — some of the same groups the minister talked about don't share her perception about fruitful negotiations or discussions or consultations. While someone can go through the motions of sitting down and meeting with people, one of the telling aspects obviously is whether there has been some indication of having heard and listened, by some recommended modifications.

I am of the belief that the labour movement is not out to bring this province to a halt, but they're being forced to. The labour movement is saying: "We've got experience in transitions. We've got experience in readjustments, in

squaring different bargaining groups with other bargaining groups." That body of knowledge is already there. If it can be ameliorated, then why not proceed with it?

On this side of the House, we have made suggestions. Why not take the experience of the Ontario Labour Relations Board and use it? One reaction I've heard is they're too busy. I can imagine they're too busy, because they lost 40% of their budget, so they must be pretty busy with the resources they have.

However, if we think of setting up two brand-new commissions with new people, I've heard from some independent arbitrators, by the way, that they would not want to be part of those commissions, because they feel they would lose their professional stature among their colleagues, that they would be seen as a sellout, having to live with the kinds of conditions that are imposed on those commissions, the criteria they would have to use for making decisions, that this flies in the face of their profession, flies in the face of the history and evolution of labour principles and labour law.

What might happen? There are some rumours around that suggest maybe the government will say: "Okay, we'll ask the labour relations board to pick up this role, but the criteria we had for the use by the commissions would still apply to the usage by the labour relations board," which of course would lead us right back to where we are now and would still be of concern to the labour movement and to many of the professionals, the firefighters, the nurses and the professional groups that we have.

That route, you can't go down it half way. You have to trust at some point and encourage, and I'm sure there can be some agreement reached, even at this late stage, with the labour movement on an understanding, as partners moving ahead in the most responsible kind of fashion.

But to take away, especially in the case of the essential workers, the one tool — I don't think there is any other tool they have, other than perhaps job action or a little bit of job slowdown. The only tool they have in the process of collective bargaining to settle a dispute and a resolution is that with their employer, usually a municipality or hospital administration, if they go down the road of negotiations, collective bargaining, and they cannot resolve it, but they agree to arbitration, the one thing they can do is participate in selecting the arbitrator.

That's not really very much. I don't know why the government would be so tough on this one when you must know at this stage, Minister, that is so important. It's not only the function, but it's the symbolism of it. As you know, we all meet with the firefighters and we all meet with the police and they tell us this is like a slap in the face to them. They said: "Look, we don't strike. Take a look at our history. We didn't strike when we had the right to strike." Now they don't even have the right to strike. "But the one thing we do have which we think is fair and important, and the only thing we have, that one we will stand up for and we will go to the wall for."

I am sure the minister has heard that argument. I know she is considering that very carefully and I hope she'll get

the support of her colleagues in order to bring about some amendments in the legislation in order to proceed.

I have to leave some time for my colleagues, so I am going to wind up at this point. I just want to say two things: One is that, for those people who may be watching, you're experiencing a new kind of diminution of the democratic Legislative process in Ontario. I say that in a non-partisan fashion. It disturbs me, it worries me, I feel saddened. As an elected member, I feel diminished by not being able to fulfil my responsibilities as an elected member, as a representative, to be a critic for a certain area of concern and to provide avenues for people to voice their opinions as well. This takes away that opportunity. Any time you take away the opportunity for people to hear about legislation, because this will mean fewer people will hear about it when you move very quickly, less opportunity for people to think or consider something, then I think we lose a democratic participatory opportunity in this jurisdiction.

1700

I would say at the moment, according to our procedures — I just attended a conference with representatives from all jurisdictions across Canada, including the federal government — that I believe we now have the most undemocratic Legislature in the land. It saddens me, frankly, to say that. It saddens me that the veneer of democracy that I used to think was so thick is now looking quite thin, for governments to see that to have debate and to have the government stalled for a day or two or whatever it might be to reconsider its position is an obstacle. It's not.

Being able to ask the government to reflect longer, to speak on an issue, to carry forward some representations from the community and from all around Ontario is not a nuisance, is not an obstacle, it's a necessity. That's what responsible government is. That's the difference between tyranny and responsible government, that the government puts forward its programs and provides an opportunity for people to react and to respond to all of this.

My second part is on the hearings themselves, that this particular motion limits the time for that. But I would underscore again that if the government were truly serious about learning something, making the assumption anyway that there may be some good ideas there, even from the government's own point of view, there may be some ideas that come out of those hearings that will cause us to reflect upon what is there at the moment, and they might like to revamp or revise, even in their own self-interest.

They've given themselves two days, a Saturday and a Sunday, because at 10 o'clock on that Monday we have to have our amendments in. I would say to you, knowing the small amount of resources that the opposition has, you know that is a very tall, almost impossible order. To consider the full range of depositions that have been presented and the likelihood of some valuable suggestions for amendments is a daunting task.

I want to underscore that and I hope the minister has heard that message. I believe it's fundamental to democracy. I think it may take a lot of time for people to begin to understand what the significance of some of these rules

are and what it means in being able to carry out responsibilities and for people to be aware of the issues.

I say, in conclusion, to the minister to move ahead very carefully. I believe we are sitting on a time bomb in this province, where certain federations and certain unions believe that they are against the wall and that they will have little choice to stand up for any rights that they do have. That will vary from union to union, I grant you, but for some of them it's only one or two things, and this impinges upon their rights, and they are very upset about it and will go to no ends in order to communicate that message to this government.

I want to stop there. Thank you for the opportunity. I'll share my time with my colleagues.

**Mr Bradley:** What is pretty instructive this afternoon is that we are facing yet another time allocation motion, that is, a motion which will severely restrict debate on this very important piece of legislation and which will eventually, in the not-too-distant future, completely close off debate on this legislation, which I believe deserves a very considerable debate and discussion by members of this House and people in our communities across the province.

Despite the fact that this government has brought in the most restrictive rules changes, that is, changes to the procedural rules of this House, to grease the skids for its radical right-wing legislation and policies, what we are seeing is the government employing, day after day, closure motions closing down debate on important issues of the day. Anybody who doesn't think that democracy isn't affected by this is either very naïve or simply doesn't care about that democratic process.

There's an alarming trend with this government, and I think members of the government who are not in the cabinet should reflect upon this very carefully. The rot is setting in, and it happens, I can tell you, to many different governments over the years. But you can see the signs. There's an alarming trend in the back rooms of the government, in particular in the Premier's office.

I noted today that Canada NewsWire Ltd will now be the official purveyor of government news releases. The purpose of having this organization — and I read here: "A reporter can search for a ministry by topic or name and find 13 months of archival news releases. This is a powerful tool for background information." In other words, they're going to set up this agency — by the way, paid for by the taxpayers of this province — to purvey the government line and to bypass the Queen's Park press gallery, the provincial press gallery, in order that they will not be subjected to scrutiny and criticism. That's what this is all about.

But it's part of a trend. You'll notice that ministers today hold more and more of their press conferences outside the precinct of this Legislature, again because the people they have to deal with in the press gallery in the Ontario Legislature are experienced and knowledgeable reporters and columnists who know the questions to ask and who have some background on many of these issues. I think that's extremely important.

They're embarking upon expensive, self-serving, blatantly political advertising, again at the cost of millions of dollars to the taxpayers of this province. This week people will be opening their mailboxes to find the latest propaganda from the government, at the cost of the taxpayers. They can turn on their television sets and they will see the ads paid for by the taxpayers of this province. That's blatantly unfair in the democratic process, because opposition parties do not have that same opportunity. If the Progressive Conservative Party were paying for it — and, heaven knows, they should have lots of money because all of those fund-raisers they are holding for the people they are doing favours for with this legislation and the regulatory changes are overflowing those fund-raisers. They should use that money, if they're going to use money, to purvey their message.

They are also changing the procedural rules in such a way as to make it more inconvenient for members of the news media to be able to cover the events and the issues at Queen's Park, and of course the media giants are closing Queen's Park bureaus and are limiting the number of people they have as employees to cover the news. Conrad Black has downsized everywhere he has been. The government's going to be happy with that. The fewer reporters there are, the more bureaus, such as the Thomson bureau, close down here — they're tinkering now with the Southam bureau. They're going to change that, make it a Toronto bureau of some kind. When you see the London Free Press losing its bureau here at Queen's Park — all of these are steps that the government will be in favour of, but they're not good for democracy.

Another thing we have that is usually a sign of panic setting in is that the flacks, that is, the news or media representatives for various ministers, are now going to members of the news media and berating them for the coverage. If they don't like the story, they go into their offices and berate them about the coverage they are receiving. There are many days when I may not agree with the coverage that the opposition may be receiving or I may feel that the government is receiving favourable coverage. I don't head into the various newsrooms to complain about that.

We all want fairness, we all want balance, we all want both sides to be heard, and that's what debate in this House is all about. But now we have members of the government, their flacks, heading around and pointing the fingers and trying to intimidate members of the news media into giving them better coverage. That, I can tell you, will backfire.

1710

**Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke-Rexdale):** You name one.

**Mr Bradley:** The member from Rexdale asks for examples. I suggest you go and ask your minister's flacks who has been around berating various members of the news media for their coverage. That's who you can go to. You just go and ask them, member for Etobicoke-Rexdale, and they will tell you.

What has happened here as well is that Hansard is no longer available. The transcripts of this province are no longer available in print. So if someone from the riding of Victoria-Haliburton wishes to have the Hansard — that is, the transcript of everything that takes place in this House — delivered to their house at their expense, they cannot do so. You now have to be on the Internet to be able to get that. So that again favours people with more money and more privilege than others. I want to indicate that that is a step backwards.

Now we see that the budgets for the Ontario legislative channel are being proposed to be cut, and for TVO, which again provide coverage of what happens in this House so people can make their judgements. That is a step backwards, but it's an effort to control everything coming out of this place, to control the message, to control information.

This government broke a commitment. I'm the House leader for the official opposition; I meet with the House leaders of the government and the third party. We discussed having hearings across Ontario in various communities so that people in Timmins, Kapuskasing, Sudbury, St Catharines, Ottawa, London and right across the province could have input into this legislation. What we have now is the government abandoning that and saying somehow they're going to put a television screen in and watch people from there.

I believe they're afraid of the reaction because they believe ordinary, everyday workers in this province will show up at those hearings to make their views known. You're not going to get the rich and the privileged there except to endorse this legislation, but you'll get a lot of people from the general public who don't usually get involved in politics, who don't usually become militant in any way; they want to live their lives. They are the people who would show up.

The government has reneged on its commitment to have those hearings across the province. I know the Minister of Labour would probably be delighted to have those hearings, but I know what happens. I know how the Premier's office controls all in this government. Therefore, we're not going to have those hearings.

You know, when people don't have their day in court, they're even more resentful. Even if they disagree with legislation, if they've had their opportunity to respond in person, they feel at least they've had their day in court.

I was in Timmins on the past weekend and talking to Brian Ehman of Timmins, who said that he felt people in the north seem to be isolated from some of the happenings at Queen's Park and he would be hopeful, as would many people around various communities in the province, that there would be an opportunity to make representations on bills such as this. The Liberals have demanded, as have the third party, such hearings across this province. We believe you're hiding from the people when you deny that opportunity.

I've listened to the Conservatives berate the NDP about the social contract, saying: "Well, you know, here's this social contract legislation that the NDP brought in that

abrogated every contract in Ontario. Weren't those contracts a matter of sanctity for the trade union movement?" I remember who voted for it. If they thought it was so bad, why did the Conservatives vote for that legislation? In fact, I recall Mike Harris saying, "Bring it in and we'll pass it, bang, bang, bang, all in one day." Yet I hear members of the government criticizing the NDP for bringing in the social contract legislation. I think the government is being — we can't use the word "hypocritical" in this House. But if I can think of another word, I will use it later on, because I can't use "hypocritical" in the House.

I talked to the police. This government had some support among the policing community during the last election campaign. They were in my office, representatives of the Niagara Regional Police Force, and they were extremely unhappy that they would be included in this legislation. They say the way things are working right now is fine with them, it seems to be working well for the public, and they're very resentful of the fact that the government would do this. I don't think they could be bought off by taking them out of the legislation and leaving everybody else in, because they will stand together with their fellow public employees.

We have general municipal employees doing a variety of jobs for municipalities — libraries, transit workers, police, fire departments, local social and health services, school boards, non-teaching and part-time teaching employees, nurses and non-nursing staff in the health care field — all affected by this legislation.

What you want to do is provoke a strike. It's quite obvious now that you want a major confrontation. You're down in the polls, Mike Harris, and you want to now provoke a confrontation with people who don't want to go on strike. These people aren't eager to get out on strike. They're reluctant to do so. They lose money. They lose other benefits when they're on strike. Therefore, they would rather see this resolved in an amicable way, which I think it can be. But the government of Ontario is picking a fight with many employees because they think they can curry some favour with others in the community who may be resentful of those people in the public sector.

I think instead what the government should be doing is seeking a consensus, being conciliatory, bringing people together, the way Bill Davis used to. Yes, labour was unhappy from time to time with what Bill Davis did, but very often he was able to find items which would appeal to the trade union movement and to workers in this province. As well as making certain concessions to the management side, he would make certain concessions to the labour side. The employees of this province don't see that balanced, conciliatory, consensus-building approach with this particular government as they did perhaps with other Conservative governments and with governments of other political affiliations.

We also know that legislation will be forthcoming which will affect members of the teaching profession. Again, I talk to these people. I know a lot of these people. They are not eager to get out and hit the bricks. They know what's happening. They know they're going to be

pushed to the wall as well and that if they lie down and play dead, this government will trample over them. So you're making militant people out of people who aren't normally militant. People in the classroom are there to deliver an educational service. Their primary concern, their paramount concern, is the wellbeing of students in this province, including members of the administration and others who assist in education in any way. They want that institution to be open. They want those schools to be available to students.

But they also recognize that this government is determined to take away many of the rights they fought for over the years. All of these people recognize the times we're in and the circumstances they're facing. They are not unreasonable people. But this government will not make the kind of moves towards accommodating their concerns that are necessary to avoid a significant confrontation in this province.

I notice this bill as well ends the employee wage protection program. That's being chopped. That's been put in the background as part of this legislation, I believe. That was a good program, by the way.

**Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine):** Do you know what that program is?

**Mr Bradley:** That was brought in by the NDP government that also brought in the social contract. The member for Beaches-Woodbine asked me that.

There was some balance there and it was a good program because a lot of those people were left out in the cold before. Someone today phoned my office and said, "I have a claim against an employer who's gone out of business and refuses to pay, and I'm stuck." So my office called the Ministry of Labour office and the answer was, "They have to wait eight months before they're going to have this case even looked at." That's because of the significant cuts in the Ministry of Labour office. That's most unfortunate. That may not worry the member from Rexdale or many of the Conservative members, but it worries everyday, ordinary people — not rich people, but everyday, ordinary people out there. I think it's lamentable that that program is terminated.

I see this government moving in the wrong direction. A foolish trend is being established towards bigger instead of better. So we must have bigger municipalities, we must have larger school boards which are the size of many countries in Europe, larger health councils, larger everything, when what we really need in this province is something that takes into account local accountability and local input. Bigger isn't always better, and it's not always going to save money for this government, as they think it is.

In concluding my remarks, I call upon the government to withdraw Bill 136, to start again a meaningful consultation, to try to build consensus, to be conciliatory and to bring about peace in this province, peace in our time, our turbulent times in this province, by sitting down with the representatives of employees and of management and bringing them together to find acceptable, plausible, balanced solutions to the problems that confront us as a result of the legislation this government is bringing in.

1720

**Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming):** I'm just going to take a few minutes to put on the record the importance the police associations across Ontario attach to Bill 136. I've had submissions from the Metropolitan Toronto Police Association, the Police Association of Ontario and the association that represents the OPP across this province.

As my colleagues the members for St Catharines and Ottawa Centre mentioned, we are really concerned and wondering why the Minister of Labour has included municipal policing in this bill. The record for police disputes in this province is an excellent one. Police organizations really don't like to get involved in political activity. They know they're there to uphold the law. They feel uncomfortable lobbying politicians. Only in very rare circumstances have they failed to negotiate a contract and have had to go to arbitration. But at least when they did go to arbitration, maybe four times in the last few years, they had confidence in the system. They knew the arbitrators were independent and they had faith and confidence in that.

Now the minister, with Bill 136, is going to bring in — on a permanent basis, by the way — a Dispute Resolution Commission that is going to stay beyond these two-year, so-called temporary labour rules changes and is going to be there as handpicked government arbitrators who will dictate in the future to both sides in a dispute exactly how the settlement is going to go down. That is going to shake the confidence in all the public sector people who, if having to go to this extent, at least in the past have had confidence that an independent arbitrator would come in to settle the dispute. When it is an independent arbitrator, even if you maybe don't get everything you want, at least you have faith in the system, and in the end you accept the decision. But with this new, handpicked government Dispute Resolution Commission, the problem that I see is going to happen down the road is that we're not going to get the acceptance by probably either side, whoever loses the decision, of the decision. That's going to be the problem. We're not going to get labour rest; we're going to get unrest because of this.

I make a last-minute plea to the minister to at least, besides all the other changes we'd like to see, exempt police and firefighters from this legislation, especially municipal police forces. They have the protocol in their associations now where they're able to handle, and have been able to handle in the past, amalgamations, which we're unfortunately going to be facing more of in the next year. They know how to handle that and they've done that successfully. They don't have to have these provisions shoved down their throat, as Bill 136 does.

I'd say to the minister that you need to take another look at that. We want to make sure that our police forces are working well, working cooperatively with their employers, the municipalities across this province. It's very important that we have that good relationship so we have good, secure public safety in our communities. Minister, make sure that's out of there. Look for those amendments. I wish you were going across the province so you'd hear

that from policewomen and policemen across this province who are going to be telling you that. Unfortunately, those hearings are not going to be travelling; they're only going to be in Toronto. That's a shame, because this committee should be going out and hearing what all public sector workers and the public in general want to say on this bill.

**Mr Christopherson:** I appreciate the opportunity to comment on the disgrace that's happening here today.

I want to begin by responding to some of the comments of my fellow Hamiltonian, the member for Hamilton West, who, coming from a labour town, had, first, the personal audacity and, second, the political naïveté to stand up and support not only Bill 136, which is one thing, but this process of shutting down democracy and making a sham of any public hearings. I can't for the life of me believe how anyone from Hamilton could stand in this place, the people's place, and support legislation that does what this does and, more important today, the way it does it.

Then, the shocker of all shocks, in the middle of her speech she talked about the endorsements from other communities. What she failed to tell the people is that her own city council in Hamilton unanimously opposed the implementation of Bill 136, in fact rejected it and asked the government to retract it.

I'm going to read part of that resolution verbatim.

"Whereas Bill 136 imposes a new system of dispute settlement upon public sector labour relations which violates basic democratic principles; and

"Whereas neither the Labour Relations Transition Commission nor the Dispute Resolution Commission can be considered independent or impartial, nor do they have the confidence of the workplace parties and so fail to meet the internationally recognized standard for civilized labour relations practice, as set by the United Nations, to which Canada subscribes;

"Therefore be it resolved that the council of the corporation of the city of Hamilton is opposed to the passage of Bill 136 and urges that it be withdrawn by the government of Ontario or defeated by the Legislature, and that the existing collective bargaining practices and procedures under existing labour relations legislation continue without political interference."

That's the position of our Hamilton city council, and I say bravo to them for having the courage to do it. I can say with a great deal of confidence on behalf of Wayne Marston, the president of the labour council, that all of labour in our community is opposed. For anyone elected in our community to come into this place and stand and say they support Bill 136 and the shutting down of democracy, to me, is doing a disservice and a total injustice to the very people who elected them — and that's not considering the political stupidity of it.

As usual with this government we don't have a lot of time, so I want to talk briefly about — it's been mentioned, but I want to make sure the ground is covered — exactly what's in Bill 136. There are two pieces of what we're talking about today. One is what's in 136 and why labour and municipalities — by the way, it's not just the Hamilton city council but AMO, the Association of Mu-

nicipalities of Ontario, who rejected Bill 136 also. It's important to understand why that's being rejected by all the parties.

First of all, there's no question that this is meant to strip collective agreements. Negotiations halt when either party sends it off to the Dispute Resolution Commission. That commission then, by virtue of having received it, guarantees that the workers have lost the only real leveraging power they have at the bargaining table. That's the right to strike. That's gone automatically. But it also gives this commission the power to take out, alter and change any part of a collective agreement they choose.

We're not only talking about wages and benefits and perhaps grievance procedures, safety procedures — who knows? It's all up for grabs. Not only is all that on the line, but isn't it kind of coincidental that weakening collective agreements in the public sector fits so nicely with the idea that this government wants those jobs privatized anyway? Doesn't that make those services more appealing to their corporate pals who are salivating at the door, waiting to buy into public services so they can turn a profit, which in and of itself is not a sin, but in this case it's on the backs on those workers because their rights and standard of living and wages and benefits are going to be reduced. They're not going to go up. We're not going to see any better collective agreements. That's not what this is about.

1730

By the way, who are these grand Pooh-Bahs of the labour economy now? Friends of Mike Harris. Mike Harris, by virtue of cabinet decision, gets to appoint all the people who sit on this commission and make the decisions. In the past, we had independent arbitration where there were individuals on a list who were agreed upon by worker representatives and employer representatives, where both said: "Yes, if we can't reach an agreement and rather than be in a strike situation, or perhaps the law forbids it, we'll send it to them and we'll each make our best case as in any kind of arbitration. They'll decide and we'll live by that decision."

That still is not perfect, but at least it's fair, unlike the Dispute Resolution Commission contained in Bill 136, which has nothing to do with fairness, because those commissioners are handpicked by the cabinet, and I'll bet a dollar to doughnuts that there are corporate entities and friends of Mike Harris who are going to get a whole lot of influence and say in who those people are who are appointed, and very little by labour, if any at all.

Maybe the government is going to bring out some amendments. Who knows? They won't show us. We don't know what their amendments are. They weren't tabled here today along with the time allocation.

By the way, in what we've coined in our caucus as a drive-by shooting, Bill 136 also makes a further attack on pay equity legislation, protection for women workers, those who are in jobs that are among the lowest paid in our society, your favourite target, the vulnerable. Bill 136 does that.

It also eliminates the final pieces of a program we were very proud of enacting as an NDP government, the employee wage protection plan, that made sure employees didn't lose vacation and wages they were owed, and severance and termination pay they were owed in the event of a closure or a bankruptcy. You've eliminated that as part of 136. It doesn't have anything to do with 136. The only commonality it shares is that it's an attack on rights and benefits that workers are deserving and have and it takes those away. That's the only thing consistent with what you're doing in 136.

Let's take a look at exactly what's going on overall here. First of all, we've got a government that has decided they're going to make sure that the 30% tax cut is carried out no matter what. Never mind the fact that they claim the debt and deficit are the absolute crisis that's driving everything, which of course immediately puts the lie to the argument of giving revenue back. If your debt and deficit is your biggest priority, if that's what's driving everything, what the hell are you doing giving back \$5 billion or \$6 billion of revenue? It doesn't even make any kind of common sense. What it does do is take care of your political pals.

Where are you going to find this money? It's \$5 billion or \$6 billion. If it was being shared equally, you might even have a better stand in terms of defending it, but the reality is, ask any worker in this province, ask any middle-class working family what they've benefited by the tax cut. What? A cup of coffee or two a month? But you take someone who is making big bucks, Mike Harris's friends, I mean serious coin, they're making hundreds of thousands of dollars. There are those people in this province. They are getting back thousands and thousands and thousands of after-tax dollars. But it has to be paid for. Who's paying for it? Working middle-class families. They're paying for it with hospital closures. They're paying for it with an attack on education: \$1 billion out already, another billion to come out. They're paying for it with user fees, cuts in services.

Ask seniors how they feel about your copayment. But that's not user fees, is it? Not unless you listen to the former leader of the third party in the last Parliament, who said that copayment and user fees are the same thing. Who would that be? Mike Harris. Funny how that works out. That's where it's being paid for.

But you know, even that hasn't been enough, because \$5 billion and \$6 billion is a lot of money, it's a lot of service. So where is the government going next? They're going after municipalities and school boards and everybody that's in the public sector that receives a transfer payment. I admit that this is the point when an awful lot of people glaze over, transfer payments; it's just sort of all red tape and bureaucracy. But in this case it's so crucial to understand and appreciate that the senior level of government, in this case the provincial government, in large part because of their broad tax base, because of their broad taxing powers, assists municipalities in paying for virtually everything they provide. So when there's a cut from this place, from Queen's Park, to each of our respective

municipalities, our communities are affected because something's got to give.

But Mike Harris has said what's not going to give is any kind of increase in property tax. Here you've got all these municipal leaders who have been told, "You're going to be cut by millions and millions." I believe the figure is around \$60 million to \$80 million net loss in my community. That money can't be made up for in property taxes. Why? Mike Harris would look awfully bad if he talked about this great tax cut that he gave everybody, but the opposition could point to all of the increases in property tax and make the argument you haven't cut anything, you just transferred it from one place to another and gave your pals billions of dollars in the process and jacked up the cost of living in all our communities by the property tax going up. They've all but declared by edict, "Thou shalt not increase property taxes."

Municipal politicians, and again because I was one for five years, are very close to their communities and they know what's important. They know what matters to people. If you're going to talk a dollar or two off somebody's property tax but it means they're going to lose something valuable in the community, people are not quick to say that's a fair deal. In fact most people, because they can't afford to replace whatever is being lost on their own, think it's a bad deal.

What's left? The municipal politicians are turning to the government and saying: "How's this supposed to be? You want us to cut millions and billions of dollars out of our budgets, you tell us that we can't increase property taxes, we know politically that we can't cut services. How do we get out of this jackpot that you've put us in, Premier Harris?"

"Don't worry about it," says Elizabeth Witmer. "I'll give you the tools you need to pay for it. You know how we'll pay for it? We'll take it away from the public sector workers. Yes, that's how we'll do it. And you know what? I'll make it real easy for you. I'll make sure they can't strike. I'll make sure they go into negotiations with both hands tied behind their backs. No, wait a minute. I've got a better idea. I'll make a law that says my friends will decide what the collective agreement is."

Ergo, Bill 136. That's what it does. It's meant to be the out for local politicians not to raise property tax, not to cut services, but to take every dime of that transfer off the backs of working people, men and women who under the regime of Mike Harris were unfortunate enough to happen to work in the public sector, who you have declared time and time again as special interests. Those special interests are my neighbours and they're your neighbours and they're your family members. By the way, you're all public sector servants too.

Now we've got a situation where it's perfectly set up for collective agreements to be stripped and watered down to provide a means for local municipalities to pay for this cut in money that you are putting upon them. Also, it sets up services to be privatized, because there's a weakened collective agreement and anybody who buys that service, if they have to keep the collective agreement — in the

case of provincial workers they don't because your Bill 7 took that away — in terms of any municipal services, they've got a watered-down collective agreement and those workers are going to have to fight years to get back what they've lost — all to pay for your tax cut, which your buddies are getting rich from. That's what's going on.

1740

It's not just a coincidence that Bill 152 is being time allocated also. Bill 152 is your downloading bill. That's the very bill that's cutting the transfer payments to municipalities. You've time limited that too. You've linked the two of them. It's not a difficult case for us to make.

By the way, all of this is happening in the context of this House having the rules changed in a way that makes this the most undemocratic era ever in the history of Ontario. You can already ram through legislation at lightning speed in a way that no other government has been able to before, nor was allowed to, nor would even think about. I don't care whether we're talking NDP, Liberal or the Tories of old. We're talking about a regime that has decided that it wants the power to ram through whatever it wants, whenever it wants.

*Interjection.*

**The Acting Speaker:** Member for Brampton North, come to order.

**Mr Christopherson:** That's the context of what's happening here. That's the context, where this government said, "That's not enough" —

*Interjection.*

**The Acting Speaker:** Member for Brampton North, I don't think you could hear me, you were yelling so loud. Please come to order.

**Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton North):** Sorry, David. We were yelling pretty loud.

**Mr Christopherson:** That's all right. I was saying that the government has these undemocratic rules, where it can pass legislation at lightning speed, but that's not enough. They want to ram Bill 136 through this Legislature in a way that not only is undemocratic, is not only disgusting; it's cowardly and it violates the word of the Minister of Labour, who said she would take that committee and Bill 136 across the province in full province-wide public hearings. What did she say exactly? I quote from Hansard of June 4 of this year: "Yes, I commit to you that there will be full public hearings. We will travel the province."

The motion we're debating today denies going outside Toronto, outside Queen's Park totally. The minister broke her word. It's very clear. What has the response of the labour movement been? My colleague from Ottawa Centre has read the quotes from Gord Wilson, president of the Ontario Federation of Labour. I will not read those again; you've heard them. If you listened to the minister's comments earlier — for those who are interested, go back and read them in Hansard — you'd think everything was going along smoothly and that the labour movement was quite happy and quite pleased with the turn of events. The reality is quite the opposite.

Your government, and one has to believe you're doing it deliberately, has put this province on a war footing with the labour movement. We almost have to believe that's what you want. Why else would you do it? Why else, after we embarrassed your Premier into meeting with the labour movement — and everyone had the warm fuzzies when they came out of that meeting — before anything was concluded, and at the same time that the Minister of Labour still says she wants to have dialogue and consultation and listen, at the same time all that's supposed to be happening — as a gesture of goodwill, the government says — would they drop this time allocation motion today?

Let's understand how the labour movement approached this. I have the Ontario Federation of Labour's submission dated September 2 to the government. I want to read a couple of parts so that people will understand the attitude and the tone that the labour movement in Ontario was prepared to carry into proper, credible, honourable discussions, which is what they thought they were being offered. Obviously, as a result of today's actions, that's not the case. But listen to this. Does this sound like a group of people who want confrontation?

"Ontario's broader public sector employees and the unions which represent them believe that there are alternatives to Bill 136 which would preserve fundamental rights, protect democratic principles and safeguard the fairness and integrity of the arbitration and adjudication process. Our alternative proposals are rooted in the current practice not only in Ontario but in all of the separate Canadian jurisdictions, and they respect the principles set out in international conventions which Canada has supported but which are violated by Bill 136."

How do they end their submission? With a threat? Quite the contrary:

"We are confident that these measures, taken together, will serve to permit the fair, effective and timely resolution of all issues arising out of the current round of amalgamations and mergers.

"Respectfully submitted,

"The Ontario Federation of Labour."

What is your response to their offer? To shut down the process. What exactly are you doing? At five to six today you'll use your majority to ram through this time allocation motion. That effectively ends second reading — gone. Then we'll go into committee hearings. Remember the ones where the minister said, "I commit to you there will be full public hearings; we will travel the province"? I'm not talking about this virtual reality travelling they're talking about.

Come on. Who are you kidding? If there is a benefit to teleconferencing, then let's have one of the committees take a look at it. It's a major change, but if there's a way to apply new technology, fine, let's talk about it. Let's see if that's possible. Maybe it will help; maybe it won't. I suspect it won't eliminate actually going into communities. We do benefit by visiting communities other than Queen's Park and our own, because we are responsible for the entire province. But even if you wanted to do that, there is a legitimate way to introduce the idea. Instead, the

first time I have ever heard it in this place is in trying to defend why the minister broke her word. How flimsy, how shallow, how obvious.

What's going to happen? After today we go into committee hearings only in Queen's Park, only in Toronto, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday until 5 o'clock. Let's remember first of all that ordinarily we send out notices, we advertise, for weeks we advertise on the parliamentary channel when the House isn't sitting: "Those who want to make submissions, here is when the hearings will be, here is where they will be. Here are copies of what we are talking about in terms of the legislation." We take weeks to do that. Two weeks is normally considered — I've sat on enough subcommittees — a fairly short period of time, and you only accept that when it's necessary. How much time are the people of Ontario going to get? From today until next Tuesday. Plus, we don't even know what the exact legislation is. We know you made your cabinet decisions on what the bill is going to look like at the end of the day, but you haven't tabled any amendments, so we don't even know at this point what it is people are expected to comment on.

You expect people to believe that somehow they're not being shortchanged, that this isn't meant to deny people, that somehow you really aren't hiding. People aren't as stupid as you would like and hope them to be. They're going to see through this, for God's sake. They saw through it on Bill 99 and they came out in droves. They saw it on Bill 49 and they came out in droves. It's because they did that you're going to hide here at Queen's Park with all the security and all the benefit you need, because I don't think you've got the guts to go out into those communities and face people. I wouldn't be the least bit surprised if there was a backbench revolt at caucus that said, "I'm not sitting on that committee. I did it on 49, and I'm not going again," or "I was on that thing for 99, and I'm not going again. You're not getting me out there defending this bloody thing." That's what's really going on. You're hiding. You're afraid to face the people, absolutely frightened.

But what happens at the end of next Friday? Between now and Tuesday people get to prepare for the phantom bill. They don't know exactly what it's going to be at the end of the day, don't know what decisions have been made, so I'm not sure how they're supposed to prepare for it. But given that somehow they do, they've only got till Tuesday.

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How we're ever supposed to notify enough people all over the province to be heard — and are we going to subsidize them to come down here, or is it only people who are in driving distance who even get a shot at these meagre crumbs? Who knows? There's no time to talk or think about anything. You just ram stuff through. You don't know the implications, and more importantly, you don't care about the implications. That's obvious.

Then we get to Friday at 5 o'clock. What happens at 5 o'clock? That's when the pumpkin magically ends being the listening. And Monday at 10 o'clock we, the opposi-

tion parties, are supposed to have our amendments in, as I understand it, in legalistic terms. The government has the same process, of course, but they already know what they're going to do or they wouldn't live under these time frames. They made their decisions at cabinet today. They know where they're going.

But we get until the end of Friday at 5 o'clock. Think about it. How do you defend this? Friday at 5 o'clock in the afternoon the public hearings, such as they are, end. At 10 o'clock Monday morning all the amendments are supposed to be in, in legal form. What a joke and what an insult, especially when the minister stands in her place and says, "We're going to continue listening." What did she say? "We will continue with consultation on amendments." Give me a break. How are you ever going to take something said on Friday at 1 o'clock and incorporate it into an amendment that has to be in legal form Monday at 10 o'clock? Of course you can't.

It's not so much just that you're ramming it through, but it's that you still persist in standing in your place and saying, "We're listening and we want to have consultation and we want to have meaningful dialogue." That's what's so insulting about this. It's so insulting that you believe anybody is actually going to think you care about what they have to say. You couldn't. It's so ridiculous. It is absolutely mind-boggling what you expect people to believe just because you say it.

Time after time after time, when the Minister of Labour stands up and says, "The world is this way," it's usually the opposite. When she said, "Our legislation is meant to do this," it does the opposite. It's the same with the Minister of Environment: "Cutting my ministry is good for the environment." The Minister of Health: "Cutting the health budget is good for health. Closing hospitals is good for health." Education: "We cut out \$1 billion and made it so much better, we're going to cut another \$1 billion and make it twice as good." It's these kinds of insults.

The minister stands up and says, "We approach labour relations in this province with a view to making things fair and balanced." In two major pieces of legislation, WCB Bill 99 and the Ontario Labour Relations Act, Bill 7, you took the bloody word "fair" out of the law when it was already in there.

**Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South):** On a point of order, Madam Speaker: I've been back in this chamber five minutes. Do we really have to listen to this cussing and swearing? Is that parliamentary language?

**The Acting Speaker:** Member for Mississauga South, take your seat, please. I'm not ruling that unparliamentary language. It's been used many times in the House before.

**Mrs Marland:** So you accept cussing and swearing in this House?

**The Acting Speaker:** Member for Mississauga South, I am not going to argue with you about this. Please take your seat. Member for Hamilton Centre, continue.

**Mr Christopherson:** I'll tell you what's unparliamentary, member for Mississauga South, and I'll tell you what's unacceptable and disgusting is your government's continuing attack on workers in this province, and the

sight of you standing up supporting it and defending it is even worse, because you're so bloody sanctimonious all the time.

The fact of the matter is that I've got about two or three minutes left to offer up for our party all of the concerns that we have about what's in Bill 136, about the undemocratic process that you've imposed here and the fact that you are not listening. You have no intention of listening. There's nothing about what you've done around Bill 136 that suggests you care about anything other than pulling that money — I would argue almost legally stealing that money — from public sector workers to directly pay for your tax cut. That's what's going on.

With the rule changes where you've already got the ability to introduce a bill Monday morning and make it law Thursday night, that's not good enough. Muzzle the opposition to the point where we've only got a few minutes to speak to major bills, that's not enough. What you have to do on Bill 136 is you have to put this province on the brink of war with the labour movement because you leave them no alternative.

I'll tell you, every one of you, if you were treated personally the way your government's treating them, you'd react exactly the same way. Let me tell you, if you think you're going to hive off public sector workers and put "special interest" on their forehead and think that you're going to get away with this attack while everybody stands aside, you're wrong. The special convention of the Ontario Federation of Labour spoke to the fact that they're united, private sector and public sector, and I can tell you our communities are united. In Hamilton alone, you've got the labour movement and the city council both opposing it.

Where's your justification? There is none. This is all about dictatorial rule and about doing whatever you want. The added insult is you're not even up front about it. You keep covering things up by saying, "We still want to consult and we still want to listen." I'll tell you, if you really want to listen, take this bill out in the province like your minister promised. She said: "Yes, I commit to you that there will be full public hearings. We will travel the province." That minister stood up today and said, "We will not travel the province." The minister broke her word. The government broke its word.

You're not interested in listening. You're not interested in negotiating. You want confrontation. You want trouble. You want that, and let me tell you, if you go through with this, you're bloody well going to get it.

**The Acting Speaker:** Further debate? Mrs Witmer has moved government notice of motion number 40. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion, please say "aye."

Those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members; a five-minute bell.

*The division bells rang from 1759 to 1804.*

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** All those in favour of government motion number 40, please stand and be recognized by the Clerk.

#### Ayes

Amott, Ted	Hamick, Charles	Rollins, E.J. Douglas
Baird, John R.	Hastings, John	Ross, Lillian
Beaubien, Marcel	Hudak, Tim	Runciman, Robert W.
Boushy, Dave	Johnson, Bert	Sampson, Rob
Brown, Jim	Johnson, David	Saunderson, William
Carr, Gary	Johnson, Ron	Sheehan, Frank
Carroll, Jack	Jordan, W. Leo	Snobelen, John
Cunningham, Dianne	Kells, Morley	Spina, Joseph
Danford, Harry	Leach, Al	Sterling, Norman W.
DeFaria, Carl	Leadston, Gary L.	Stewart, R. Gary
Doyle, Ed	Marland, Margaret	Tilson, David
Fisher, Barbara	Martiniuk, Gerry	Turnbull, David
Flaherty, Jim	McLean, Allan K.	Vankoughnet, Bill
Fox, Gary	Munro, Julia	Villeneuve, Noble
Froese, Tom	Murdoch, Bill	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Galt, Doug	Newman, Dan	Witmer, Elizabeth
Gilchrist, Steve	O'Toole, John	Wood, Bob
Grimmett, Bill		

**The Speaker:** All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

#### Nays

Agostino, Dominic	Cullen, Alex	Lessard, Wayne
Bisson, Gilles	Gerretsen, John	Martel, Shelley
Boyd, Marion	Grandmaitre, Bernard	Martin, Tony
Bradley, James J.	Gravelle, Michael	Miclash, Frank
Brown, Michael A.	Kennedy, Gerard	Patten, Richard
Castrilli, Annamarie	Kormos, Peter	Ramsay, David
Christopherson, David	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Silipo, Tony
Churley, Marilyn	Lankin, Frances	Wildman, Bud
Conway, Sean G.	Laughren, Floyd	Wood, Len

**Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers):** The ayes are 52; the nays are 27.

**The Speaker:** I declare the motion carried.

It now being after 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 10 of the clock tomorrow morning.

*The House adjourned at 1807.*

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